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PATENT APPLICATION
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GENES INTEGRATING SIGNAL TRANSDUCTION PATHWAYS

Related Applications

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Application Nos. 60/105,507, filed on October 23,1998, and 60/108,685, filed on November 16, 1998.

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to novel polynucleotides and proteins encoded by such polynucleotides, along with therapeutic, diagnostic, and research utilities for these polynucleotides and proteins.

Background of the Invention

Ras proteins are key regulators of growth, differentiation and malignant transformation. In addition, these proteins are implicated in synaptic function and region-specific learning and memory functions in the brain.

As shown schematically in Figure 1, Ras proteins cycle between inactive GDP-complexed and active GTP-complexed states. GTPase-activating proteins (GAPs) inactivate Ras proteins by stimulating hydrolysis of the bound GTP to GDP, whereas guanine nucleotide exchange factors (GEFs) activate Ras proteins by stimulating release of GDP and the uptake of GTP. So essential are GEFs to Ras action, that genetic loss of GEF function has similar effects to those induced by loss of the Ras proteins themselves. Loss of GEF function can be circumvented by mutations that constitutively activate the Ras proteins, such as an oncogene mutation, or, in some cases, through loss of GAP activity. Activated Ras proteins, which are localized at the plasma membrane, transmit signals from tyrosine kinases to a cascade of serine/threonine kinases, which delivers the signals to the cell nucleus.

Activation of Ras can result in the activation of the mitogen-activated protein (MAP) kinase (also known as extracellular-signal regulated kinase, or ERK) pathway. For example, a receptor tyrosine kinase is activated by a peptide mitogen such as epidermal growth factor

(EGF). The EGF-stimulated receptor undergoes autophosphorylation of specific tyrosine residues in its cytoplasmic domain which creates phosphotyrosyl binding sites for the Src homology 2 (SH2) and/or phosphotyrosyl binding (PTB) domains of certain adapter proteins. The adapter protein becomes autophosphorylated on association with activated receptor tyrosine kinases. The GEF is stably associated with the adapter protein which, upon autophosphorylation, mediates translocation of the GEF to the plasma membrane. The GEF then activates the Ras protein. Activated Ras relays its signal downstream through a cascade of cytoplasmic proteins, including Raf-1 serine/threonine kinase. The Ras:Raf association promotes translocation of the normally cytoplasmic Raf protein to the plasma membrane, where subsequent events lead to the activation of its kinase function. Upon activation, Raf phosphorylates and activates two MAP kinases (also known as MEKs). MEKs directly associate with the catalytic domain of Raf-1 and are phosphorylated by Raf. Activated MEKs function as dual-specificity kinases and phosphorylate tandem threonine and tyrosine residues in the MAP kinases to activate them. Once activated, the MAP kinases translocate to the nucleus where they phosphorylate and activate a variety of substrates.

Rap proteins, members of the Ras small GTPase superfamily, can inhibit Ras signaling of the Ras/Raf-1(a serine/threonine kinase)/MAP kinase pathway or, through B-Raf, can activate MAP kinase. Rap1 consists of two isoforms, Rap1A and Rap1B, which differ mainly at the C-terminus. Characteristic features of Rap1 are its geranylgeranyl modification at the C-terminus, which is responsible for membrane attachments, and a threonine residue at position 61. In most other GTPases, the corresponding residue is a glutamine. Rap proteins, like Ras proteins, cycle between inactive GDP-complexed and active GTP-complexed states. GEFs are required to activate Rap proteins by stimulating the release of GDP and the uptake of GTP.

Constitutive activation of the Ras pathway contributes to malignant transformation. In fact, the Ras gene has been implicated in many human cancers, including lung cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer, exocrine pancreatic cancer, and myeloid leukemia. Biological and biochemical studies of Ras action indicate that Ras functions like a G-regulatory protein since Ras must be localized in the plasma membrane and must bind with GTP in order to transform cells. Gibbs et al., 53 MICROBIOL. REV. 171-286 (1989).

Targeting components of the Ras signaling pathways has been proposed as one approach for the development of anti-Ras drugs for cancer treatment. One potential approach for targeting Ras for cancer treatment involves the use of farnesyltransferase inhibitors (FTIs). Inhibition of farnesyl-protein transferase, and thereby of farnesylation of the Ras protein, blocks the ability of Ras to transform normal cells to cancer cells. Certain inhibitors of Ras farnesylation cause an increase in soluble Ras which can act as a dominant negative inhibitor of Ras function. While soluble Ras in cancer cells can become a dominant negative inhibitor, soluble Ras in normal cells would not be an inhibitor. A cytosol-localized and activated form of Ras acts as a dominant negative Ras inhibitor of membrane-bound Ras function. Gibbs et al., 86 PROC. NAT'L ACAD. SCI. USA 6630-34 (1989). FTIs block Ras function by preventing its post-translational modification by the farnesyl isoprenoid.

Intervention of Ras signaling at multiple or various points can significantly impact the ability of Ras to cause cellular transformation. Since Ras protein function is believed to be crucial to so many cellular processes, targeting only a subset of Ras functions by downstream intervention may provide significant advantages. Thus, there remains a need for identifying additional means for disrupting the Ras pathway. Applicants have discovered four new targets, namely GEFs specific for Rap1A , for disrupting the Ras pathway.

Summary of the Invention

Applicants have discovered four mammalian genes which have been designated CalDAG-GEFI, CalDAG-GEFII, cAMP-GEFI, and cAMP-GEFII, which encode proteins having a substrate specificity for Rap1A. The proteins encoded by CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII, referred to herein generally as "CalDAG-GEF," have dual binding domains for calcium and diacylglycerol. The proteins cAMP-GEFI and cAMP-GEFII, referred to herein generally as "cAMP-GEF," have a binding domain for cyclic adenosine 3', 5'-monophosphate. The present disclosure provides polypeptide and polynucleotide sequences for Mus musculus CalDAG-GEFI, Homo sapiens CalDAG-GEFI, Rattus norvegicus CalDAG-GEFII, Homo sapiens CalDAG-GEFII, Rattus norvegicus cAMP-GEFI, Homo sapiens cAMP-GEFI, Homo sapiens alternatively spliced cAMP-GEFI, Rattus norvegicus cAMP-GEFII, and Homo sapiens cAMP-GEFII. See

Kawasaki et al., 95 Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 13278-83 (1998), and Kawasaki et al., 282 Sci. 2275-79 (1998), the disclosures of both of which are incorporated by reference herein.

Thus, in one series of embodiments, the present invention provides isolated nucleic acids including nucleotide sequences comprising or derived from CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, or encoding polypeptides comprising or derived from CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins. The sequences of the invention include the specifically disclosed sequences, splice variants of these sequences, allelic variants of these sequences, synonymous sequences, and homologous or orthologous variants of these sequences. Thus, for example, the invention provides nucleic acid sequences from the Mus musculus CalDAG-GEFI, Homo sapiens CalDAG-GEFI, Rattus norvegicus CalDAG-GEFII, Homo sapiens CalDAG-GEFII, Rattus norvegicus cAMP-GEFI, Homo sapiens cAMP-GEFI, Homo sapiens alternatively spliced cAMP-GEFI, Rattus norvegicus cAMP-GEFII, and Homo sapiens cAMP-GEFII. The present invention also provides allelic variants and homologous or orthologous sequences by providing methods by which such variants may be routinely obtained. Because the nucleic acids of the invention may be used in a variety of diagnostic, therapeutic and recombinant applications, various subsets of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF sequences are also provided. For example, for use in allele specific hybridization screening or PCR amplification techniques, subsets of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF sequences, including both sense and antisense sequences, and both normal and mutant sequences, as well as intronic, exonic and untranslated sequences, are provided. Such sequences may comprise a small number of consecutive nucleotides from the sequences which are disclosed or otherwise enabled herein, but preferably include at least 8-10, more preferably 10-15, and most preferably 15-25, consecutive nucleotides from a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence. In another embodiment, such sequences include between 25-500 consecutive nulceotides. Other preferred subsets of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence include those encoding one or more of the functional domains or antigenic determinants of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein and, in particular, may include either normal (wild-type) or mutant sequences. The invention also provides for various nucleic acid constructs in which CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences, either complete or subsets, are operably joined to exogenous sequences to form cloning vectors, expression vectors, fusion vectors, transgenic constructs, and the like. Thus, in accordance with another aspect of the invention, a recombinant vector for transforming a

mammalian or invertebrate tissue cell to express a normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequence in the cells is provided.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides for host cells which have been transfected or otherwise transformed with one of the nucleic acids of the invention. The cells may be transformed merely for purposes of propagating the nucleic acid constructs of the invention, or may be transformed so as to express the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences. The transformed cells of the invention may be used in assays to identify proteins and/or other compounds which affect normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF expression, which interact with the normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins, and/or which modulate the function or effects of the normal or mutant proteins, or to produce the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins, fusion proteins, functional domains, antigenic determinants, and/or antibodies of the invention. Transformed cells may also be implanted into hosts, including humans, for therapeutic or other reasons. Preferred host cells include mammalian cells, including pure or mixed cell cultures, as well as bacterial, yeast, nematode, insect and other invertebrate cells. For uses as described below, preferred cells also include embryonic stem cells, zygotes, gametes, and germ line cells.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides transgenic animal models of diseases or disorders associated with mutations in the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes. The animal may be essentially any non-human mammal, including rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, dogs, cats, goats, sheep, pigs, and non-human primates. In addition, invertebrate models, including nematodes and insects, may be used for certain applications. The animal models are produced by standard transgenic methods including microinjection, electroporation, transfection, or other forms of transformation of embryonic stem cells, zygotes, gametes, and germ line cells with vectors including genomic or cDNA fragments, minigenes, homologous recombination vectors, viral insertion vectors and the like. Suitable vectors include vaccinia virus, adenovirus, adeno-associated virus, retrovirus, liposome transport, neuraltropic viruses, and Herpes simplex virus. The animal models may include transgenic sequences comprising or derived from the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes, including normal and mutant sequences, intronic, exonic and untranslated sequences, and sequences encoding subsets of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins, such as functional domains.

The major types of animal models provided include: (1) Animals in which a normal human CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene has been recombinantly introduced into the genome of the animal as an additional gene, under the regulation of either an exogenous or an endogenous promoter element, and as either a recombinant gene or a large genomic fragment; in which a normal human CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene has been recombinantly substituted for one or both copies of the animal's homologous CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene by homologous recombination or gene targeting; and/or in which one or both copies of one of the animal's homologous CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes have been recombinantly "humanized" by the partial substitution of sequences encoding the human homologue by homologous recombination or gene targeting; (2) Animals in which a mutant human CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene has been recombinantly introduced into the genome of the animal as an additional gene, under the regulation of either an exogenous or an endogenous promoter element, and as either a recombinant gene or a large genomic fragment; in which a mutant human CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene has been recombinantly substituted for one or both copies of the animal's homologous CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene by homologous recombination or gene targeting; and/or in which one or both copies of one of the animal's homologous CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene have been recombinantly "humanized" by the partial substitution of sequences encoding a mutant human homologue by homologous recombination or gene targeting; (3) Animals in which a mutant version of one of that animal's CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene has been recombinantly introduced into the genome of the animal as an additional gene, under the regulation of either an exogenous or an endogenous promoter element, and as either a recombinant gene or a large genomic fragment; and/or in which a mutant version of one of that animal's CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene has been recombinantly substituted for one or both copies of the animal's homologous CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene by homologous recombination or gene targeting; and (4) "Knock-out" animals in which one or both copies of one of the animal's CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes have been partially or completely deleted by homologous recombination or gene targeting, or have been inactivated by the insertion or substitution by homologous recombination or gene targeting of exogenous sequences.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides for substantially pure protein preparations including polypeptides comprising or derived from the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins. The CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF protein sequences of the invention include the specifically disclosed sequences, variants of these sequences resulting from alternative mRNA splicing, allelic variants of these sequences, and homologous or orthologous variants of these sequences. Thus, for example, the invention provides amino acid sequences from the Mus musculus CalDAG-GEFI protein, Homo sapiens CalDAG-GEFI protein, Rattus norvegicus CalDAG-GEFII protein, Homo sapiens CalDAG-GEFII protein, Rattus norvegicus cAMP-GEFI protein, Homo sapiens cAMP-GEFI protein, Homo sapiens alternatively spliced cAMP-GEFI protein, Rattus norvegicus cAMP-GEFII protein, and Homo sapiens cAMP-GEFII protein. The present invention also provides allelic variants and homologous or orthologous proteins by providing methods by which such variants may be routinely obtained. The present invention also specifically provides for mutant or disease-causing variants of CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF by providing methods by which such variants may be routinely obtained. Because the proteins of the invention may be used in a variety of diagnostic, therapeutic and recombinant applications, various subsets of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF protein sequences and combinations of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF protein sequences with heterologous sequences are also provided. For example, for use as immunogens or in binding assays, subsets of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF protein sequences, including both normal and mutant sequences, are provided. Such protein sequences may comprise a small number of consecutive amino acid residues from the sequences which are disclosed or otherwise enabled herein, but preferably include at least 4-8, and preferably at least 9-15 consecutive amino acid residues from a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence. In another embodiment, such sequences comprise at least 15-200 consectuive amino acid residues. Other preferred subsets of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF protein sequences include those corresponding to one or more of the functional domains or antigenic determinants of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF proteins and, in particular, may include either normal (wild-type) or mutant sequences. The invention also provides for various protein constructs in which a CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences, either complete or subsets thereof, are joined to exogenous sequences to form fusion proteins and the like. In accordance with these embodiments, the present invention also provides for methods

of producing all of the above described proteins which comprise, or are derived from, CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides for the production and use of polyclonal and monoclonal antibodies, including antibody fragments, including Fab fragments, $F(ab')_2$, and single chain antibody fragments, which selectively bind to CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, or to specific antigenic determinants of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF. The antibodies may be raised in mouse, rabbit, goat or other suitable animals, or may be produced recombinantly in cultured cells such as hybridoma cell lines. Preferably, the antibodies selectively bind to a sequence comprising at least 4-8, and preferably at least 9-15, ,a nd more preferably at least 15-200 consecutive amino acid residues from a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence. The antibodies of the invention may be used in the various diagnostic, therapeutic and technical applications described herein.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides methods of screening or identifying proteins, small molecules or other compounds which are capable of inducing or inhibiting the expression and/or function of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes or proteins. The assays may be performed *in vitro* using non-transformed cells, immortalized cell lines, or recombinant cell lines, or *in vivo* using the transgenic animal models enabled herein. In particular, the assays may detect the presence of increased or decreased expression of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF-related genes or proteins on the basis of increased or decreased mRNA expression, increased or decreased levels of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF-related protein products, or increased or decreased levels of expression of a marker gene (*e.g.,* β-galactosidase, green fluorescent protein, alkaline phosphatase or luciferase) operably joined to a 5' regulatory region in a recombinant construct. Cells known to express CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, or transformed to express CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, are incubated and one or more test compounds are added to the medium. After allowing a sufficient period of time (*e.g.,* 0-72 hours) for the compound to induce or inhibit the expression of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, any change in levels of expression from an established baseline may be detected using any of the techniques described above. In particularly preferred embodiments, the cells are from an immortalized cell line such as a human neuroblastoma, glioblastoma or a hybridoma cell line, or are transformed cells of the invention.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides methods for identifying proteins and other compounds which bind to, or otherwise directly interact with, CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF. The proteins and compounds will include endogenous cellular components which interact with the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF *in vivo* and which, therefore, provide new targets for pharmaceutical and therapeutic interventions, as well as recombinant, synthetic, and otherwise exogenous compounds which may have CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF binding capacity and, therefore, may be candidates for pharmaceutical agents. Particularly useful components will bind with a SCR1, SCR2, SCR3, EF hand, DAG-binding or cAMP-binding domain. Thus, in one series of embodiments, cell lysates or tissue homogenates (*e.g.,* human brain homogenates, lymphocyte lysates) may be screened for proteins or other compounds which bind to one of the normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins. Alternatively, any of a variety of exogenous compounds, both naturally occurring and/or synthetic (*e.g.,* libraries of small molecules or peptides), may be screened for CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF binding capacity. In each of these embodiments, an assay is conducted to detect binding between a "CalDAG-GEF component" or a "cAMP-GEF component" and some other moiety. The "CalDAG-GEF component" or the "cAMP-GEF component" in these assays may be any polypeptide comprising or derived from a normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein, including functional domains or antigenic determinants of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, or CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF fusion proteins. In one embodiment, a CalDAG-GEF component is a SCR1, SCR2 , SCR3, EF hand, or DAG-binding domain. In another embodiment a cAMP-GEF component is a SCR1, SCR2, SCR3, or cAMP-binding domain. Binding may be detected by non-specific measures (*e.g.,* changes in intracellular Ca^{2+}, GTP/GDP ratio) or by specific measures (*e.g.,* changes in the expression of downstream genes which can be monitored by differential display, 2D gel electrophoresis, differential hybridization, or SAGE methods). The preferred methods involve variations on the following techniques: (1) direct extraction by affinity chromatography; (2) co-isolation of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF components and bound proteins or other compounds by immunoprecipitation; (3) the Biomolecular Interaction Assay (BIAcore); and (4) the yeast two-hybrid systems.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides for methods of identifying proteins, small molecules and other compounds capable of modulating the activity of

normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF. Using normal cells or animals, the transformed cells and transgenic animal models of the present invention, or cells obtained from subjects bearing normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes, the present invention provides methods of identifying such compounds on the basis of their ability to affect the expression of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF, the intracellular localization of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF, or other biochemical, histological, or physiological markers which distinguish cells bearing normal and mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences. Using the transgenic animals of the invention, methods of identifying such compounds are also provided on the basis of the ability of the compounds to affect behavioral, physiological or histological phenotypes associated with mutations in CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides methods and reagents for the screening and diagnosis of diseases or disorders associated with mutations in the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes. Screening and/or diagnosis can be accomplished by methods based upon the nucleic acids (including genomic and mRNA/cDNA sequences), proteins, and/or antibodies disclosed and enabled herein, including functional assays designed to detect failure or augmentation of the normal CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF activity and/or the presence of specific new activities conferred by the mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF. Thus, for example, screens and diagnostics based upon CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins are provided which detect differences between mutant and normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF in electrophoretic mobility, in proteolytic cleavage patterns, in molar ratios of the various amino acid residues, or in ability to bind specific antibodies. In addition, screens and diagnostics based upon nucleic acids (gDNA, cDNA or mRNA) are provided which detect differences in nucleotide sequences by direct nucleotide sequencing, hybridization using allele specific oligonucleotides, restriction enzyme digest and mapping (*e.g.,* RFLP, REF-SSCP), electrophoretic mobility (*e.g.,* SSCP, DGGE), PCR mapping, RNase protection, chemical mismatch cleavage, ligase-mediated detection, and various other methods. Other methods are also provided which detect abnormal processing of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF or proteins reacting with CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF, alterations in CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF transcription, translation, and post-translational modification; alterations in the intracellular and extracellular trafficking of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene products; or abnormal

intracellular localization of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF. Such methods and reagents are also useful in the analysis of neoplasias and mammalian immune system function, as well as functional *in vivo* imaging of mammalian organ systems. In accordance with these embodiments, diagnostic kits are also provided which will include the reagents necessary for the above-described diagnostic screens.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides methods and therapeutic agents for use in the treatment of conditions such as neurological and neuropsychiatric disorders such as Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, dystonia, Tourette's syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, depression, schizophrenia, and stroke; neoplasias such as solid tumors including colon, breast, lung, prostate, and hematopoietic tumors such as leukemia, Hodgkins, and non-Hodgkins lymphomas; and autoimmune diseases, allergies, and asthma; as well as for the enhancement of the immune response in normal and immunocompromised individuals. These methods and therapeutic agents may be based upon (1) administration of normal CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins; (2) gene therapy with normal CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes to compensate for or replace the mutant genes; (3) gene therapy based upon antisense sequences to mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes or upon sequences which "knock-out" the mutant genes; (4) gene therapy based upon sequences which encode a protein which blocks or corrects the deleterious effects of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF mutants; (5) immunotherapy based upon antibodies to normal and/or mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins; or (6) small molecules (drugs) which alter CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF expression, block interactions between (normal or mutant) forms of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF and other proteins or ligands, or which otherwise block the function of (normal or mutant) CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins by altering the structure of the proteins, by enhancing their metabolic clearance, or by inhibiting their function.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, the proteins of the invention can be used as starting points for rational drug design to provide ligands, therapeutic drugs or other types of small chemical molecules. Alternatively, small molecules or other compounds identified by the above-described screening assays may serve as “lead compounds” in rational drug design.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a partial schematic diagram of a Ras pathway.

Figure 2A shows human (h) and mouse (m) CalDAG-GEFI, human (h) and rat (r) CalDAG-GEFII, and *C. elegans* (cel) (F25B3.3, GenBank accession number: 1262950) CalDAG-GEF. Figure 2B shows a computer-generated phylogenetic tree analysis of the GEF domains of CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII in relation to other Ras-superfamily GEFs. Figure 2C shows multiple alignment of GEF structurally conserved regions (SCRs) of CalDAG-GEFs and several other GEFs of the Ras superfamily. Figure 2D shows the full-length amino acid sequences of human (h) and mouse (m) CalDAG-GEFI (box indicates amino acid differences). Figure 2E shows the sequence similarity (black indicates identity) of EF-hand domains in CalDAG-GEFs and other calcium binding proteins. Figure 2F shows the sequence similarity of DAG-binding domains of CalDAG-GEFs and PKC (protein kinase C) family proteins.

Figure 3A is a schematic representation of cAMP-GEF family proteins, including human (h) and rat (r) cAMP-GEFI, human (h) cAMP-GEFII and *C. elegans* (cel) (T2OG5.5, GenBank accession number: 458480) cAMP-GEF. Figure 3B is a phylogenetic tree analysis of cAMP binding domains of cAMP-GEFI and II and other cyclic nucleotide binding proteins. Figure 3C is a phylogenetic tree analysis of GEF domains of cAMP-GEFI and II and other Ras superfamily GEFs. Figure 3D shows the amino acid sequences of the structurally conserved regions (SCRs) of cAMP-GEFs and other Ras superfamily GEFs (black indicates identity). Figure 3E shows the amino acid sequences of the cAMP binding pockets of cAMP-GEFI and II and other cyclic nucleotide-binding proteins. The positions of invariant amino acid residues are shown by black diamonds. The open diamond indicates the amino acid that determines the binding specificity for cAMP or cGMP. The arrow indicates the position of amino acid substitutions specific to cAMP-GEFs. Figure 3F is the full-length amino acid sequences of human cAMP-GEFI and II (boxes indicate amino acid identity).

Detailed Description of the Invention

The present invention is based, in part, upon the discovery of a family of mammalian genes which are associated with the Ras pathway. The discovery of these genes, designated CalDAG-GEFI, CalDAG-GEFII, cAMP-GEFI, and cAMP-GEFII, as well as the characterization of these genes, their protein products, mutants, and possible functional roles, are described below.

I. Definitions

In order to facilitate review of the various embodiments of the invention, and an understanding of the various elements and constituents used in making and using the invention, the following definitions are provided for particular terms used in the description and the claims which follow:

CalDAG-GEF. As used without further modification herein, the terms "CalDAG-GEF" or "CalDAG-GEFs" refer to the CalDAG-GEFI and/or the CalDAG-GEFII genes/proteins. In particular, the unmodified terms "CalDAG-GEF" or "CalDAG-GEFs" refer to the mammalian genes/proteins and, preferably, the human genes/proteins.

cAMP-GEF. As used without further modification herein, the terms "cAMP-GEF" or "cAMP-GEFs" refer to the cAMP-GEFI and/or the cAMP-GEFII genes/proteins. In particular, the unmodified terms "cAMP-GEF" or "cAMP-GEFs" refer to the mammalian genes/proteins and, preferably, the human genes/proteins.

CalDAG-GEF gene. As used herein, the term "CalDAG-GEF gene" means the mammalian genes represented by SEQ ID NOS: 1, 3, 5, and 7, as well as any allelic variants and heterospecific mammalian homologues. A murine CalDAG-GEFI cDNA sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 1, and a human CalDAG-GEFI cDNA sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 3. A rat CalDAG-GEFII cDNA sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 5, and a human CalDAG-GEFII cDNA sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 7. The term "CalDAG-GEF gene" primarily relates to a coding sequence, but can also include some or all of the flanking regulatory regions and/or introns. The term "CalDAG-GEF gene" specifically includes artificial or recombinant genes created from cDNA or genomic DNA, including recombinant genes based upon splice variants.

CalDAG-GEF protein. As used herein, the term "CalDAG-GEF protein" means a protein encoded by a CalDAG-GEF gene, including allelic variants and heterospecific mammalian homologues. A murine CalDAG-GEFI protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 2, and a human CalDAG-GEFI protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 4. A rat CalDAG-GEFII protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 6, and a human CalDAG-GEFII protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 8. Splice variants are also embraced by the term CalDAG-GEF protein as used herein. The protein may be produced by recombinant cells or organisms, may be substantially purified from natural tissues or cell lines, or may be synthesized chemically or enzymatically. Therefore, the term "CalDAG-GEF protein" is intended to include the protein in glycosylated, partially glycosylated, or unglycosylated forms, as well as in phosphorylated, partially phosphorylated, unphosphorylated, sulphated, partially sulphated, or unsulphated forms. The term also includes allelic variants and other functional equivalents of the CalDAG-GEF amino acid sequences, including biologically active proteolytic or other fragments.

hCalDAG-GEF gene and/or protein. As used herein, the abbreviation "hCalDAG-GEF" refers to the human homologue and human allelic variants of the CalDAG-GEF genes and/or proteins. Two cDNA sequences of the human CalDAG-GEF genes are disclosed herein as SEQ ID NOS: 3 and 7. The corresponding hCalDAG-GEF protein sequences are disclosed herein as SEQ ID NOS: 4 and 8. Allelic variants, including deleterious mutants, are enabled in the description which follows.

mCalDAG-GEF gene and/or protein. As used herein, the abbreviation "mCalDAG-GEF" refers to the murine homologues and murine allelic variants of the CalDAG-GEF gene and/or protein. A cDNA sequence of one murine CalDAG-GEF gene is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 16. The corresponding mCalDAG-GEF protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 17. Allelic variants, including deleterious mutants, are enabled in the description which follows.

rCalDAG-GEF gene and/or protein. As used herein, the abbreviation "rCalDAG-GEF" refers to the rat homologue and rat allelic variants of the CalDAG-GEF genes and/or proteins. A cDNA sequence of one rat CalDAG-GEF gene is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 5. The

corresponding rCalDAG-GEF protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 6. Allelic variants, including deleterious mutants, are enabled in the description which follows.

cAMP-GEF gene. As used herein, the term "cAMP-GEF gene" means the mammalian genes represented by SEQ ID NOS: 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17, as well as any allelic variants and heterospecific mammalian homologues. A rat cAMP-GEFI cDNA sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 9, and a human cAMP-GEFI cDNA sequence is disclosed as SEQ ID NO:11. Another human cAMP-GEFI cDNA sequence, resulting from alternative splicing of the mRNA transcript, is disclosed as SEQ ID NO: 13. A rat cAMP-GEFII cDNA sequence is disclosed as SEQ ID NO: 15, and a human cAMP-GEFII cDNA sequence is disclosed as SEQ ID NO: 17. The term "cAMP-GEF gene" primarily relates to a coding sequence, but can also include some or all of the flanking regulatory regions and/or introns. The term cAMP-GEF gene specifically includes artificial or recombinant genes created from cDNA or genomic DNA, including recombinant genes based upon splice variants.

cAMP-GEF protein. As used herein, the term "cAMP-GEF protein" means a protein encoded by a cAMP-GEF gene, including allelic variants and heterospecific mammalian homologues. A rat cAMP-GEFI protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 10, and a human cAMP-GEFI protein sequence is disclosed as SEQ ID NO: 12. Another human cAMP-GEFI protein sequence, resulting from alternative splicing of the mRNA transcript, is disclosed as SEQ ID NO: 14. A rat cAMP-GEFII protein sequence is disclosed as SEQ ID NO: 16, and a human cAMP-GEFII protein sequence is disclosed as SEQ ID NO: 18. Splice variants are also embraced by the term cAMP-GEF protein as used herein. The protein may be produced by recombinant cells or organisms, may be substantially purified from natural tissues or cell lines, or may be synthesized chemically or enzymatically. Therefore, the term "cAMP-GEF protein" is intended to include the protein in glycosylated, partially glycosylated, or unglycosylated forms, as well as in phosphorylated, partially phosphorylated, unphosphorylated, sulphated, partially sulphated, or unsulphated forms. The term also includes allelic variants and other functional equivalents of the cAMP-GEF amino acid sequences, including biologically active proteolytic or other fragments.

hcAMP-GEF gene and/or protein. As used herein, the abbreviation "hcAMP-GEF" refers to the human homologue and human allelic variants of the cAMP-GEF gene and/or protein. One

cDNA sequences of the human cAMP-GEF gene is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 18. The corresponding hcAMP-GEF protein sequence is disclosed herein as SEQ ID NO: 19. Numerous allelic variants, including deleterious mutants, are disclosed and enabled throughout the description which follows.

rcAMP-GEF gene and/or protein. As used herein, the abbreviation "rcAMP-GEF" refers to the rat homologue and rat allelic variants of the cAMP-GEF gene and/or protein. Two cDNA sequences of rat cAMP-GEF genes are disclosed herein as SEQ ID NOS: 9 and 15. The corresponding rcAMP-GEF protein sequences are disclosed herein as SEQ ID NOS: 10 and 16.. Numerous allelic variants, including deleterious mutants, are disclosed and enabled throughout the description which follows.

Normal. As used herein with respect to genes, the term "normal" refers to a gene which encodes and expresses a normal protein. As used herein with respect to proteins, the term "normal" means a protein which performs its usual or normal physiological role and which is not associated with, or causative of, a pathogenic condition or state. Therefore, as used herein, the term "normal" is essentially synonymous with the usual meaning of the phrase "wild type." For any given gene, or corresponding protein, a multiplicity of normal allelic variants may exist, none of which is associated with the development of a pathogenic condition or state. Such normal allelic variants include, but are not limited to, variants in which one or more nucleotide substitutions do not result in a change in the encoded amino acid sequence.

Mutant. As used herein with respect to genes, the term "mutant" refers to a gene which encodes a mutant protein and/or fails to express a normal protein. As used herein with respect to proteins, the term "mutant" means a protein which does not perform its usual or normal physiological role and which is associated with, or causative of, a pathogenic condition or state. Therefore, as used herein, the term "mutant" is essentially synonymous with the terms "dysfunctional," "pathogenic," "disease-causing," and "deleterious." With respect to the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF genes and proteins of the present invention, the term "mutant" refers to CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF genes/proteins bearing one or more nucleotide/amino acid substitutions, insertions and/or deletions which cause the genes/proteins to be dysfunctional, pathogenic, disease-causing or otherwise deleterious. This definition is understood to include the various mutations that naturally exist, including but not limited to those disclosed herein, as well

as synthetic or recombinant mutations produced by human intervention. The term "mutant," as applied to the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF genes, is not intended to embrace sequence variants which, due to the degeneracy of the genetic code, encode proteins identical to the normal sequences disclosed or otherwise enabled herein; nor is it intended to embrace sequence variants which, although they encode different proteins, encode proteins which are functionally equivalent to normal CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins.

Functional equivalent. As used herein in describing gene sequences and amino acid sequences, the term "functional equivalent" means that a recited sequence need not be identical to a particularly disclosed sequence of the SEQ ID NOs but need only provide a sequence which functions biologically and/or chemically as the equivalent of the disclosed sequence.

Substantially pure. As used herein with respect to protein preparations, the term "substantially pure" means a preparation which contains at least 60% (by dry weight) the protein of interest, exclusive of the weight of other intentionally included compounds. Preferably the preparation is at least 75%, more preferably at least 90%, and most preferably at least 99%, by dry weight the protein of interest, exclusive of the weight of other intentionally included compounds. Purity can be measured by any appropriate method, e.g., column chromatography, gel electrophoresis, or HPLC analysis. If a preparation intentionally includes two or more different proteins of the invention, a "substantially pure" preparation means a preparation in which the total dry weight of the proteins of the invention is at least 60% of the total dry weight, exclusive of the weight of other intentionally included compounds. Preferably, for such preparations containing two or more proteins of the invention, the total weight of the proteins of the invention be at least 75%, more preferably at least 90%, and most preferably at least 99%, of the total dry weight of the preparation, exclusive of the weight of other intentionally included compounds. Thus, if the proteins of the invention are mixed with one or more other proteins (e.g., serum albumin, 6-OST) or compounds (e.g., diluents, detergents, excipients, salts, polysaccharides, sugars, lipids) for purposes of administration, stability, storage, and the like, the weight of such other proteins or compounds is ignored in the calculation of the purity of the preparation.

Isolated nucleic acid. As used herein, an "isolated nucleic acid" is a ribonucleic acid, deoxyribonucleic acid, or nucleic acid analog comprising a polynucleotide sequence that has

been isolated or separated from sequences that are immediately contiguous (one on the 5' end and one on the 3' end) in the naturally occurring genome of the organism from which it is derived. The term therefore includes, for example, a recombinant nucleic acid which is incorporated into a vector, into an autonomously replicating plasmid or virus, or into the genomic DNA of a prokaryote or eukaryote; or which exists as a separate molecule (*e.g.,* a cDNA or a genomic DNA fragment produced by PCR or restriction endonuclease treatment) independent of other sequences. It also includes a recombinant DNA which is part of a hybrid gene encoding additional polypeptide sequences and/or including exogenous regulatory elements.

Transformed cell. As used herein, a "transformed cell" is a cell into which (or into an ancestor of which) has been introduced, by means of recombinant DNA techniques, a nucleic acid molecule of interest. The nucleic acid of interest will typically encode a peptide or protein. The transformed cell may express the sequence of interest or may be used only to propagate the sequence. The term "transformed" may be used herein to embrace any method of introducing exogenous nucleic acids including, but not limited to, transformation, transfection, electroporation, microinjection, viral-mediated transfection, and the like.

Operably joined. As used herein, a coding sequence and a regulatory region are said to be "operably joined" when they are covalently linked in such a way as to place the expression or transcription of the coding sequence under the influence or control of the regulatory region. If it is desired that the coding sequences be translated into a functional protein, two DNA sequences are said to be operably joined if induction of promoter function results in the transcription of the coding sequence and if the nature of the linkage between the two DNA sequences does not (1) result in the introduction of a frame-shift mutation, (2) interfere with the ability of the regulatory region to direct the transcription of the coding sequences, or (3) interfere with the ability of the corresponding RNA transcript to be translated into a protein. Thus, a regulatory region would be operably joined to a coding sequence if the regulatory region were capable of effecting transcription of that DNA sequence such that the resulting transcript might be translated into the desired protein or polypeptide.

Stringent hybridization conditions. Stringent hybridization conditions is a term of art understood by those of ordinary skill in the art. For any given nucleic acid sequence, stringent hybridization conditions are those conditions of temperature, chaotrophic acids, buffer, and ionic

strength which will permit hybridization of that nucleic acid sequence to its complementary sequence and not to substantially different sequences. The exact conditions which constitute "stringent" conditions, depend upon the nature of the nucleic acid sequence, the length of the sequence, and the frequency of occurrence of subsets of that sequence within other non-identical sequences. By varying hybridization conditions from a level of stringency at which non-specific hybridization occurs to a level at which only specific hybridization is observed, one of ordinary skill in the art can, without undue experimentation, determine conditions which will allow a given sequence to hybridize only with complementary sequences. Suitable ranges of such stringency conditions are described in KRAUSE ET AL., METHODS IN ENZYMOLOGY, 200: 546-56 (1991). Stringent hybridization conditions, depending upon the length and commonality of a sequence, may include temperatures of 20°C-65°C and ionic strengths from 5x to 0.1x SSC. Highly stringent hybridization conditions may include temperatures as low as 40-42°C (when denaturants such as formamide are included) or up to 60-65°C in ionic strengths as low as 0.1x SSC. These ranges, however, are only illustrative and, depending upon the nature of the target sequence, and possible future technological developments, may be more stringent than necessary. Less than stringent conditions are employed to isolate nucleic acid sequences which are substantially similar, allelic or homologous to any given sequence.

Selectively bind. As used herein with respect to antibodies, an antibody is said to "selectively bind" to a target if the antibody recognizes and binds the target of interest but does not substantially recognize and bind other molecules in a sample, *e.g.,* a biological sample, which includes the target of interest.

CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorder, condition, or disease. AS used herein, the term "CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF associated disorder, condition, or disease" means any disorder, condition, or disease to which a normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF is related in any manner, such as in the causation, prevention, exacerbation, alleviation of the disorder. Thus, as used herein, a CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorder, condition, or disease includes disorders related to the Ras-pathway, such as Ras-related cancers.

Adapter protein. As used herein, the term "adapter protein" means any protein that binds or is bound to a CalDAG-GEF or a cAMP-GEF protein, and facilitates localization of the bound CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF at the plasma membrane, thereby facilitating Ras activation.

Variant. As used herein a "variant" sequence has, or will result in having, a sufficient amino acid similarity to have a reasonable expectation of success in the methods of the present invention. In order to produce variants of the disclosed sequences that may also functionally serve as a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein, any one or more of the naturally-occurring CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences disclosed herein may be used as a reference sequence to determine whether a candidate sequence possesses sufficient amino acid similarity to have a reasonable expectation of success in the methods of the present invention. Preferably, variant sequences are at least 70% similar or 60% identical, more preferably at least 75% similar or 65% identical, and most preferably 80% similar or 70% identical to one of the disclosed, naturally-occurring sequences.

To determine whether a candidate peptide region has the requisite percentage similarity or identity to a reference polypeptide or peptide oligomer, the candidate amino acid sequence and the reference amino acid sequence are first aligned using the dynamic programming algorithm described in Smith and Waterman (1981), J. Mol. Biol. 147:195-197, in combination with the BLOSUM62 substitution matrix described in Figure 2 of Henikoff and Henikoff (1992), "Amino acid substitution matrices from protein blocks", PNAS (1992 Nov), 89:10915-10919. For the present invention, an appropriate value for the gap insertion penalty is -12, and an appropriate value for the gap extension penalty is -4. Computer programs performing alignments using the algorithm of Smith-Waterman and the BLOSUM62 matrix, such as the GCG program suite (Oxford Molecular Group, Oxford, England), are commercially available and widely used by those skilled in the art.

Once the alignment between the candidate and reference sequence is made, a percent similarity score may be calculated. The individual amino acids of each sequence are compared sequentially according to their similarity to each other. If the value in the BLOSUM62 matrix corresponding to the two aligned amino acids is zero or a negative number, the pairwise similarity score is zero; otherwise the pairwise similarity score is 1.0. The raw similarity score is the sum of the pairwise similarity scores of the aligned amino acids. The raw score is then normalized by dividing it by the number of amino acids in the smaller of the candidate or reference sequences. The normalized raw score is the percent similarity. Alternatively, to calculate a percent identity, the aligned amino acids of each sequence are again compared

sequentially. If the amino acids are non-identical, the pairwise identity score is zero; otherwise the pairwise identity score is 1.0. The raw identity score is the sum of the identical aligned amino acids. The raw score is then normalized by dividing it by the number of amino acids in the smaller of the candidate or reference sequences. The normalized raw score is the percent identity. Insertions and deletions are ignored for the purposes of calculating percent similarity and identity. Accordingly, gap penalties are not used in this calculation, although they are used in the initial alignment.

In all instances, variants of the naturally-occurring CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins, as described above, must be tested for biological activity as described below. Specifically, the proteins must exhibit guanine nucleotide exchange factor activity, and, preferably, they have the ability to inhibit Ras signaling of the Ras/Raf-1/MAP kinase pathway.

II. The CalDAG-GEFs

CalDAG-GEFI has a substrate specificity for Rap1A, dual binding domains for calcium (Ca^{2+}) and diacylglycerol (DAG), and enriched expression in brain basal ganglia pathways and their axon-terminal regions. Expression of CalDAG-GEFI activates Rap1A and inhibits Ras-dependent activation of the Erk/MAP kinase cascade in 293T cells. Ca^{2+} ionophore and phorbol ester strongly and additively enhance this Rap1A activation. By contrast, CalDAG-GEFII exhibits a different brain expression pattern and fails to activate Rap1A, but activates H-Ras, R-Ras and the Erk/MAP kinase cascade under Ca^{2+} and DAG modulation. The CalDAG-GEF proteins have a critical neuronal function in determining the relative activation of Ras and Rap1 signaling induced by Ca^{2+} and DAG mobilization. The expression of CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII in hematopoietic organs indicates that such control has broad significance in Ras/Rap regulation of normal and malignant states.

The basal ganglia are centrally implicated in movement control and in forms of procedural learning related to habit formation. It is not yet known whether particular neurochemical specializations of the basal ganglia contribute to these behavioral functions. The basal ganglia do, however, have a unique double-inhibitory pathway design combined with abundant expression of neuromodulators in striatal neurons. A number of genes with differentially high expression in the striatum have also been identified. These include genes

coding for proteins with signaling functions, such as adenylate cyclase V (Glatt et al., 361 NATURE (LONDON), 536-38 (1993)) and DARPP-32 (Hemmings et al., 310 NATURE (LONDON) 502-05 (1984)). To identify other cellular signaling molecules that could contribute to basal ganglia functions, a search for striatum-enriched transcripts was performed by a differential display method, as discussed in Example 1. Among the transcripts identified in this search were a family of genes characterized by the presence of a Ras superfamily (GEF) domain.

Specific domains identified include structurally conserved GEF regions SCR1, SCR2, and SCR3, as shown in Figures 2C and 3D, and as shown in the following table.

TABLE 1

Gene	SCR1	SCR2	SCR3
hCalDAG-GEFI	SEQ ID NO.3: 605-677 SEQ ID NO.4: 149-173	SEQ ID NO.3: 817-946 SEQ ID NO.4: 219-262	SEQ ID NO.3: 1053-1185 SEQ ID NO.4: 298-320
hCalDAG-GEFII	SEQ ID NO.7: 728-800 SEQ ID NO.8: 205-229	SEQ ID NO.7: 913-1042 SEQ ID NO.8: 270-313	SEQ ID NO.7: 1084-1216 SEQ ID NO.8: 348-371
hcAMP-GEFI	SEQ ID NO.11: 2058-2130 SEQ ID NO.12: 205-229	SEQ ID NO.11: 2276-2405 SEQ ID NO.12: 688-731	SEQ ID NO.11: 2516-2582 SEQ ID NO.12: 767-789
rcAMP-GEFI	SEQ ID NO.9: 2050-2122 SEQ ID NO.10: 618-642	SEQ ID NO.9: 2267-2396 SEQ ID NO.10: 691-734	SEQ ID NO.9: 2502-2568 SEQ ID NO.10: 770-792
hcAMP-GEFII	SEQ ID NO.17: 2707-2779 SEQ ID NO.18: 767-791		
rcAMP-GEFII	SEQ ID NO.15: 576-648 SEQ ID NO.16: 192-216		

In addition, the EF hand and DAG-binding domains were identified as shown in Figures 2E and 2F, and as shown in the following table:

Table 2

Gene	EF Hand Domain	DAG-Binding Domain
hCalDaG-GEFI	SEQ ID NO.3: 1456-1516 SEQ ID NO.4: 432-452	SEQ ID NO.3: 1652-1804 SEQ ID NO.4: 498-548
hCalDAG-GEFII	SEQ ID NO.7: 1384-1444 SEQ ID NO.8: 427-447	SEQ ID NO.7: 1579-1729 SEQ ID NO.8: 492-542

Finally, the cAMP-binding domains were identified as shown in Figure 3E, and as shown in the following table:

Table 3

Gene	cAMP-Binding Domain
hcAMP-GEFI	SEQ ID NO.11: 2012-2255 SEQ ID NO.12: 219-300
rcAMP-GEFI	SEQ ID NO.9: 853-1096 SEQ ID NO.10: 219-300
rcAMP-GEFII	SEQ ID NO.17: 1522-1765 SEQ ID NO.18: 372-453

III. The cAMP-GEFs

Cyclic adenosine 3', 5'-monophosphate (cAMP) is a universal second messenger that induces a variety of physiological responses in eukaryotic cells ranging from growth, differentiation, and gene expression to secretion and neurotransmission. The cAMP second messenger system has also been centrally implicated in modulating synaptic function, neuroplasticity and learning and memory. Most of these effects have been attributed to the binding of cAMP to cAMP-dependent protein kinase (PKA), leading in turn to the activation of intracellular phosphorylation cascades. Reported herein is the identification of a new family of cAMP binding proteins that are differentially distributed in the brain and body organs and that are characterized by the presence of both a cAMP binding domain and a guanine nucleotide exchange factor (GEF) domain. These proteins, cAMP-GEFs, bind cAMP and selectively activate the Ras superfamily small G protein, Rap1A, in a cAMP-dependent but PKA-independent manner.

The general concept of cAMP signaling involves the sequential activation (or inhibition) of cAMP production by G proteins, the binding of cAMP to PKA, and the triggering of a series of downstream serine-threonine phosphorylation cascades. Viewed as the nearly exclusive target of cAMP binding in eukaryotic cells, PKA has been considered the essential effector molecule mediating a wide range of physiological effects of G protein/cAMP-triggered phosphorylation cascades. As the main cAMP effector, PKA has also been shown to function in the indirect coupling of the cAMP signal transduction system to other intracellular signaling cascades. The cAMP signaling system has also been strongly implicated in neuronal functions ranging from neurotransmitter-initiated signaling to neuroplasticity underlying development and memory, but PKA has not been clearly linked to all of these neuronal functions, and region-specific neuronal effects have been observed as well. The cAMP-GEF gene has a Ras superfamily GEF motif. Thus, the gene codes for a novel cAMP binding protein that directly couples the cAMP signal transduction system to Ras superfamily cascades.

IV. Preferred Embodiments

Based, in part, upon the discoveries disclosed and described herein, the following preferred embodiments of the present invention are provided.

1. Isolated Nucleic Acids

In one series of embodiments, the present invention provides isolated nucleic acids corresponding to, or relating to, the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF nucleic acid sequences disclosed herein. As described more fully below, these sequences include normal CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF sequences from humans and other mammalian species, mutant CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF sequences from humans and other mammalian species, homologous sequences from non-mammalian species such as *Drosophila* and *C. elegans*, subsets of these sequences useful as probes and PCR primers, subsets of these sequences encoding fragments of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins or corresponding to particular domains or polymorphic regions, complementary or antisense sequences corresponding to fragments of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes, sequences in which the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF coding regions have been operably joined to exogenous regulatory regions, and sequences encoding fusion proteins of the portions of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins fused to other proteins useful as markers of expression, as "tags" for purification, or in screens and assays for proteins interacting with the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs.

Thus, in a first series of embodiments, isolated nucleic acid sequences are provided which encode normal versions of the CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF proteins. Examples of such nucleic acid sequences are disclosed herein. These nucleic acids may be genomic sequences or may be cDNA sequences (*e.g.,* SEQ ID NOs: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17). Thus, for example, the invention provides nucleic acid sequences in which the alternative splice variants described herein are incorporated at the DNA level, thereby, enabling cells including these sequences to express only one of the alternative splice variants at each splice position. For example, a recombinant gene may be produced in which one of the splice variants of cAMP-GEF is incorporated into DNA such that cells having this recombinant gene can express only one of these variants. For purposes of reducing the size of a recombinant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene, a cDNA gene may be employed or various combinations of the introns and untranslated exons may be removed from a DNA construct. Such constructs may be particularly useful, as described below, in identifying compounds which can induce or repress the expression of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes.

In addition to the disclosed CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences, one of ordinary skill in the art is now enabled to identify and isolate nucleic acids corresponding to CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes or cDNAs which are allelic to the disclosed sequences or which are heterospecific homologues. Thus, the present invention provides isolated nucleic acids corresponding to these alleles and homologues, as well as various recombinant constructs derived from these sequences, by means which are well known in the art. Briefly, one of ordinary skill in the art may now screen preparations of genomic or cDNA, including samples prepared from individual organisms (*e.g.,* human cancer patients or their family members) as well as bacterial, viral, yeast or other libraries of genomic or cDNA, using probes or PCR primers to identify allelic or homologous sequences. Because it is desirable to identify additional CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene mutations which may contribute to the development of Ras-related cancers, because it is desirable to identify additional CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF polymorphisms which are not mutant or have antitumorigenic effects, and because it is also desired to create a variety of animal models which may be used to study Ras-related cancers and screen for potential therapeutics, it is particularly contemplated that additional CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences will be isolated from other preparations or libraries of human nucleic acids and from preparations or libraries from animals including rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, dogs, cats, goats, sheep, pigs, and non-human primates. Furthermore, CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF homologues from yeast or invertebrate species, including *C. elegans* and other nematodes, as well as *Drosophila* and other insects, may have particular utility for drug screening. For example, invertebrates bearing mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF homologues (or mammalian CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF transgenes) which cause a rapidly occurring and easily scored phenotype (*e.g.,* abnormal eye development after several days) can be used as screens for drugs which block the effect of the mutant gene. Such invertebrates may prove far more rapid and efficient for mass screenings than larger vertebrate animals. Once lead compounds are found through such screens, they may be tested in higher animals.

Depending upon the intended use, the present invention provides nucleic acid subsequences of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes which may have lengths varying from 8-10 nucleotides (*e.g.,* for use as PCR primers) to nearly the full size of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes. Thus, the present invention provides isolated nucleic acids

comprising sequences corresponding to at least 8 , preferably at least 10, and more preferably at least 15 consecutive, nucleotides of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes, as disclosed or otherwise enabled herein, or to their complements.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides for isolated nucleic acids encoding all or a portion of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins in the form of a fusion protein. In these embodiments, a nucleic acid regulatory region (endogenous or exogenous) is operably joined to a first coding region which is covalently joined in-frame to a second coding region. The CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences of the fusion protein may represent the first, second, or any additional coding regions. The CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences may be conserved or non-conserved domains and can be placed in any coding region for the fusion protein.

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides isolated nucleic acids in the form of recombinant DNA constructs in which a marker or reporter gene (*e.g.*, β-galactosidase, luciferase) is operably joined to the 5' regulatory region of a CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene such that expression of the marker gene is under the control of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF regulatory sequences. Such isolated nucleic acids may be used to produce cells, cell lines or transgenic animals which are useful in the identification of compounds which can, directly or indirectly, differentially affect the expression of the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs.

Finally, the isolated nucleic acids of the present invention include any of the above described sequences when included in vectors. Appropriate vectors include cloning vectors and expression vectors of all types, including plasmids, phagemids, cosmids, episomes, and the like, as well as integration vectors. The vectors may also include various marker genes (*e.g.*, antibiotic resistance or susceptibility genes) which are useful in identifying cells successfully transformed therewith. In addition, the vectors may include regulatory sequences to which the nucleic acids of the invention are operably joined, and/or may also include coding regions such that the nucleic acids of the invention, when appropriately ligated into the vector, are expressed as fusion proteins. Such vectors may also include vectors for use in yeast "two hybrid," baculovirus, and phage-display systems.

2. Substantially Pure Proteins

The present invention provides for substantially pure preparations of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins, fragments of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins, and fusion proteins including the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs or fragments thereof. The proteins, fragments and fusions have utility, as described herein, in the generation of antibodies to normal and mutant CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs, in the identification of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF binding proteins, and in diagnostic and therapeutic methods. Therefore, depending upon the intended use, the present invention provides substantially pure proteins or peptides comprising amino acid sequences which are subsequences of the complete CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins and which may have lengths varying from 4-8 amino acids (*e.g.,* for use as immunogens), or 9-15 amino acids (*e.g.,* for use in binding assays), to the complete CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins. Thus, the present invention provides substantially pure proteins or peptides comprising sequences corresponding to at least 4, preferably at least 9, more preferably at least 15 consecutive amino acids of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins, as disclosed or otherwise enabled herein.

Purification can be achieved using standard protein purification procedures including, but not limited to, gel-filtration chromatography, ion-exchange chromatography, high-performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC, ion-exchange HPLC, size-exclusion HPLC, high-performance chromatofocusing chromatography, hydrophobic interaction chromatography, immunoprecipitation, or immunoaffinity purification. Gel electrophoresis (*e.g.,* PAGE, SDS-PAGE) can also be used to isolate a protein or peptide based on its molecular weight, charge properties, and hydrophobicity.

A CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein, or a fragment thereof, may also be conveniently purified by creating a fusion protein including the desired CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence fused to another peptide such as an antigenic determinant or poly-His tag (*e.g.,* QIAexpress vectors, (QIAGEN Corp., Chatsworth, CA)), or a larger protein (*e.g.,* GST using the pGEX-27 vector (Amrad, USA) or green fluorescent protein using the Green Lantern vector (GIBCO/BRL. Gaithersburg, MD)).

3. Antibodies to the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEFs

The present invention also provides antibodies, and methods of making antibodies, which selectively bind to the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins or fragments thereof. The antibodies of the invention have utility as laboratory reagents for, *inter alia*, immunoaffinity purification of the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs, Western blotting to identify cells or tissues expressing the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs, and immunocytochemistry or immunofluorescence techniques to establish the subcellular location of the protein.

The antibodies of the invention may be generated in a host using the entire CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins of the invention or using any CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF epitope which is characteristic of that protein and which substantially distinguishes it from host proteins. Such epitopes may be identified by comparing sequences of, for example, 4-8 amino acid residues from a CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequence to computer databases of protein sequences from the relevant host. Antibodies against highly conserved domains are expected to have the greatest utility for purification or identification of CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs.

Amino acid residue positions which are potential antigenic sites in the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins and which may be useful in generating the antibodies of the invention may be determined by using computer programs such as the IBI Pustell program. Other methods of choosing antigenic determinants are known in the art and may, of course, be employed. In addition, larger fragments (*e.g,* 9-15 residues) including some of these epitopes may also be employed. Even larger fragments, including, for example, entire functional domains or multiple functional domains may also be preferred. For an overview of antibody techniques, see Antibody Engineering: A Practical Guide, Borrebaek, ed., W.H. Freeman & Company, NY (1992), or Antibody Engineering, 2nd Ed., Borrebaek, ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford (1995).

The antibodies of the invention may be labelled or conjugated with other compounds or materials for diagnostic and/or therapeutic uses. For example, they may be coupled to radionuclides, fluorescent compounds, or enzymes for imaging or therapy, or to liposomes for the targeting of compounds contained in the liposomes to a specific tissue location.

4. Transformed Cell Lines

The present invention also provides for cells or cell lines, both prokaryotic and eukaryotic, which have been transformed or transfected with the nucleic acids of the present invention so as to cause clonal propagation of those nucleic acids and/or expression of the proteins or peptides encoded thereby. Such cells or cell lines will have utility not only in the propagation and production of the nucleic acids and proteins of the present invention but also, as further described herein, as model systems for diagnostic and therapeutic assays. As used herein, the term "transformed cell" is intended to embrace any cell, or the descendant of any cell, into which has been introduced any of the nucleic acids of the invention, whether by transformation, transfection, infection, electroporation, microinjection or other means. Methods of producing appropriate vectors, transforming cells with those vectors, and identifying transformants are well known in the art and are only briefly reviewed here (see, for example, Sambrook et al. (1989) Molecular Cloning: A Laboratory Manual, 2nd ed., Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, Cold Spring Harbor, New York).

Vectors may be introduced into the recipient or "host" cells by various methods well known in the art including, but not limited to, calcium phosphate transfection, strontium phosphate transfection, DEAE dextran transfection, electroporation, lipofection (*e.g.,* Dosper Liposomal transfection reagent, Boehringer Mannheim, Germany), microinjection, ballistic insertion on micro-beads, protoplast fusion or, for viral or phage vectors, by infection with the recombinant virus or phage.

5. Transgenic Animal Models

The present invention also provides for the production of transgenic non-human animal models for the study of Ras-related cancers, for the screening of candidate pharmaceutical compounds, for the creation of explanted mammalian cell cultures (*e.g.,* neuronal, glial, organotypic or mixed cell cultures) in which mutant or wild type CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences are expressed or in which the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF genes have been inactivated (*e.g.,* "knock-out" deletions), and for the evaluation of potential therapeutic interventions.

Species suitable for use as animal models in the present invention include, but are not limited to, rats, mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, rabbits, dogs, cats, goats, sheep, pigs, and non-human primates (*e.g.,* Rhesus monkeys, chimpanzees).

Various techniques for generating transgenic animals, as well as techniques for homologous recombination or gene targeting, are now widely accepted and practiced. See, for example, Hogan et al., Manipulating Mouse Embryo (1986). To create a transgene, the target sequence of interest (*e.g.,* mutant or wild-type CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences) is typically ligated into a cloning site located downstream of a promoter element which will regulate the expression of RNA from the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence. An alternate approach to creating a transgene is to use endogenous CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF regulatory sequences to drive expression of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF transgene.

6. Assays for Drugs Which Affect CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF Expression

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides assays for identifying small molecules or other compounds which are capable of inducing or inhibiting the expression of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes and proteins. The assays may be performed *in vitro* using non-transformed cells, immortalized cell lines, or recombinant cell lines, or *in vivo* using the transgenic animal models enabled herein.

In particular, the assays may detect the presence of increased or decreased expression of CalDAG-GEF, cAMP-GEF, or other CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-related genes or proteins, on the basis of increased or decreased mRNA expression (using, *e.g.,* the nucleic acid probes disclosed and enabled herein), increased or decreased levels of CalDAG-GEF, cAMP-GEF or other CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-related protein products (using, *e.g.,* the anti-CalDAG-GEF of anti-cAMP-GEF antibodies disclosed and enabled herein), or increased or decreased levels of expression of a marker gene (*e.g.,* β-galactosidase or luciferase) operably joined to a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF 5' regulatory region in a recombinant construct.

Thus, for example, one may culture cells known to express a particular CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF and add to the culture medium one or more test compounds. After allowing a sufficient period of time (*e.g.,* 0-72 hours) for the compound to induce or inhibit the expression of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, any change in levels of expression from an established

baseline may be detected using any of the techniques described above and well known in the art. In particularly preferred embodiments, the cells are from an immortalized cell line such as a human neuroblastoma, glioblastoma or a hybridoma cell line. Using the nucleic acid probes and/or antibodies disclosed and enabled herein, detection of changes in the expression of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF and thus, identification of the compound as an inducer or repressor of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF expression, requires only routine experimentation.

In particularly preferred embodiments, a recombinant assay is employed in which a reporter gene such a β-galactosidase, green fluorescent protein, alkaline phosphatase, or luciferase is operably joined to a 5′ regulatory region of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene. The reporter gene and regulatory regions are joined in-frame (or in each of the three possible reading frames) so that transcription and translation of the reporter gene may proceed under the control of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF regulatory elements. The recombinant construct may then be introduced into any appropriate cell type, although mammalian cells are preferred, and human cells are most preferred. The transformed cells may be grown in culture and, after establishing the baseline level of expression of the reporter gene, test compounds may be added to the medium. The ease of detection of the expression of the reporter gene provides for a rapid, high through-put assay for the identification of inducers and repressors of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene.

Compounds identified by this method will have potential utility in modifying the expression of the CalDAG-GEF, cAMP-GEF or other CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-related genes *in vivo*. These compounds may be further tested in the animal models disclosed and enabled herein to identify those compounds having the most potent *in vivo* effects. In addition, as described herein with respect to small molecules having CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-binding activity, these molecules may serve as "lead compounds" for the further development of pharmaceuticals by, for example, subjecting the compounds to sequential modifications, molecular modeling, and other routine procedures employed in rational drug design.

7. Identification of Compounds with CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF Binding Capacity

In light of the present disclosure, one of ordinary skill in the art is enabled to practice new screening methodologies which will be useful in the identification of proteins and other

compounds which bind to, or otherwise directly interact with, the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs. The proteins and compounds will include endogenous cellular components which interact with the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs *in vivo* and which, therefore, provide new targets for pharmaceutical and therapeutic interventions, as well as recombinant, synthetic and otherwise exogenous compounds which may have CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF binding capacity and, therefore, may be candidates for pharmaceutical agents. Thus, in one series of embodiments, cell lysates or tissue homogenates (*e.g.,* human brain homogenates, leukocyte lysates) may be screened for proteins or other compounds which bind to one of the normal or mutant CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs. Alternatively, any of a variety of exogenous compounds, both naturally occurring and/or synthetic (*e.g.,* libraries of small molecules or peptides), may be screened for CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF binding capacity. Small molecules are particularly preferred in this context because they are more readily absorbed after oral administration, have fewer potential antigenic determinants, and/or are more likely to cross the blood brain barrier than larger molecules such as nucleic acids or proteins. The methods of the present invention are particularly useful in that they may be used to identify molecules which selectively or preferentially bind to a mutant form of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein (rather than a normal form) and, therefore, may have particular utility in treating the heterozygous victims of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF associated disorder.

Compounds which bind to normal, mutant or both forms of the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs may have utility in treatments and diagnostics. Compounds which bind only to a normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF may, for example, act as enhancers of its normal activity and thereby at least partially compensate for the lost or abnormal activity of mutant forms of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF in victims suffering from CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders. Compounds which bind to both normal and mutant forms of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF may have utility if they differentially affect the activities of the two forms so as to alleviate the overall departure from normal function. Alternatively, blocking the activity of both normal and mutant forms of either CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF may have less severe physiological and clinical consequences than the normal progress of the disorder and, therefore, compounds which bind to and inhibit the activity of both normal and mutant forms of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF may be therapeutically useful. Preferably, however, compounds

are identified which have a higher affinity of binding to mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF than to normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF, and which selectively or preferentially inhibit the activity of the mutant form. Such compounds may be identified by using any of the techniques described herein, and then comparing the binding affinities of the candidate compound(s) for the normal and mutant forms of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF.

The effect of agents which bind to the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs (normal or mutant forms of either) can be monitored either by direct monitoring of this binding (*e.g.*, using the BIAcore assay, LKB Pharmacia, Sweden) or by indirect monitoring of binding by detecting, for example, a change in fluorescence, molecular weight, or concentration of either the binding agent or CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF component, either in a soluble phase or in a substrate-bound phase.

Once identified by the methods described above, the candidate compounds may then be produced in quantities sufficient for pharmaceutical administration or testing (*e.g.*, μg or mg or greater quantities), and formulated in a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier (see, *e.g.*, REMINGTON'S PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES, Gennaro, A., ed., Mack Pub., (1990)). These candidate compounds may then be administered to the transformed cells of the invention, to the transgenic animal models of the invention, to cell lines derived from the animal models or from human patients, or to patients with CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders. The animal models described and enabled herein are of particular utility in further testing candidate compounds which bind to normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF for their therapeutic efficacy.

In addition, once identified by the methods described above, the candidate compounds may also serve as "lead compounds" in the design and development of new pharmaceuticals. For example, as in well known in the art, sequential modification of small molecules (*e.g.*, amino acid residue replacement for peptides; functional group replacement for peptide or non-peptide compounds) is a standard approach in the pharmaceutical industry for the development of new pharmaceuticals. Such development generally proceeds from a "lead compound" which is shown to have at least some of the activity (*e.g.*, CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF binding or blocking ability) of the desired pharmaceutical. In particular, when one or more compounds having at least some activity of interest (*e.g.*, modulation of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF activity) are

identified, structural comparison of the molecules can greatly inform the skilled practitioner by suggesting portions of the lead compounds which should be conserved and portions which may be varied in the design of new candidate compounds. Thus, the present invention also provides a means of identifying lead compounds which may be sequentially modified to produce new candidate compounds for use in the treatment or CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders. These new compounds then may be tested both for CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-binding or blocking (*e.g.*, in the binding assays described above) and for therapeutic efficacy (*e.g.*, in the animal models described herein). This procedure may be iterated until compounds having the desired therapeutic activity and/or efficacy are identified.

In each of the present series of embodiments, an assay is conducted to detect binding between a "CalDAG-GEF component" or a "cAMP-GEF component" and some other moiety. Of particular utility will be sequential assays in which compounds are tested for the ability to bind to only the normal or only the mutant forms of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF functional domains using mutant and normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF components in the binding assays. Such compounds are expected to have the greatest therapeutic utilities, as described more fully below. The "CalDAG-GEF component" or the "cAMP-GEF component" in these assays may be a complete normal or mutant form of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein (*e.g.*, an hCalDAG-GEF or hcAMP-GEF variant) but need not be, or a specific domain of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF.. Rather, particular functional domains of the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs, as described above, may be employed either as separate molecules or as part of a fusion protein. For example, to isolate proteins or compounds that interact with these functional domains, screening may be carried out using fusion constructs and/or synthetic peptides corresponding to these regions. Obviously, various combinations of fusion proteins and functional domains from CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF are possible. In addition, the functional domains may be altered so as to aid in the assay by, for example, introducing into the functional domain a reactive group or amino acid residue (*e.g.*, cysteine) which will facilitate immobilization of the domain on a substrate (*e.g.*, using sulfhydryl reactions).

Methods for screening cellular lysates, tissue homogenates, or small molecule libraries for candidate CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-binding molecules are well known in the art and, in light of the present disclosure, may now be employed to identify compounds which bind to

normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF components or which modulate CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF activity as defined by non-specific measures (*e.g.*, changes in intracellular Ca^{2+}, GTP/GDP ratio) or by specific measures (*e.g.*, changes in the expression of other downstream genes which can be monitored by differential display, 2D gel electrophoresis, differential hybridization, or SAGE methods). The preferred methods involve variations on the following techniques: (1) direct extraction by affinity chromatography; (2) co-isolation of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF components and bound proteins or other compounds by immunoprecipitation; (3) the Biomolecular Interaction Assay (BIAcore); and (4) the yeast two-hybrid systems. These and others are discussed separately below.

A. Affinity Chromatography

In light of the present disclosure, a variety of affinity binding techniques well known in the art may be employed to isolate proteins or other compounds which bind to the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs disclosed or otherwise enabled herein. In general, a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF component may be immobilized on a substrate (*e.g.*, a column or filter) and a solution including the test compound(s) is contacted with the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein, fusion or fragment under conditions which are permissive for binding. The substrate is then washed with a solution to remove unbound or weakly bound molecules. A second wash may then elute those compounds which strongly bound to the immobilized normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF component. Alternatively, the test compounds may be immobilized and a solution containing one or more CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF components may be contacted with the column, filter, or other substrate. The ability of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF component to bind to the test compounds may be determined as above or a labeled form of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF component (*e.g.*, a radio-labeled or chemiluminescent functional domain) may be used to more rapidly assess binding to the substrate-immobilized compound(s).

B. Co-Immunoprecipitation

Another well characterized technique for the isolation of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF components and their associated proteins or other compounds is direct immunoprecipitation with antibodies. This procedure has been successfully used, for example, to isolate many of the synaptic vesicle associated proteins (Phizicky et al., 59 J. BIOL. CHEM. 94-123 (1994)). Thus,

either normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF components may be mixed in a solution with the candidate compound(s) under conditions which are permissive for binding, and the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF component may be immunoprecipitated. Proteins or other compounds which co-immunoprecipitate with the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF component may then be identified by standard techniques as described above. General techniques for immunoprecipitation may be found in, for example, Harlow et al., ANTIBODIES: A LABORATORY MANUAL (1988).

The antibodies employed in this assay, as described and enabled herein, may be polyclonal or monoclonal, and include the various antibody fragments as well as single chain antibodies, and the like.

C. The Biomolecular Interaction Assay

Another useful method for the detection and isolation of binding proteins is the Biomolecular Interaction Assay or "BIAcore" system developed by Pharmacia Biosensor and described in the manufacturer's protocol (LKB Pharmacia, Sweden). In light of the present disclosure, one of ordinary skill in the art is now enabled to employ this system, or a substantial equivalent, to identify proteins or other compounds having CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF binding capacity. The BIAcore system uses an affinity purified anti-GST antibody to immobilize GST-fusion proteins onto a sensor chip. Obviously, other fusion proteins and corresponding antibodies may be substituted. The sensor utilizes surface plasmon resonance which is an optical phenomenon that detects changes in refractive indices. A homogenate of a tissue of interest is passed over the immobilized fusion protein and protein-protein interactions are registered as changes in the refractive index. This system can be used to determine the kinetics of binding and to assess whether any observed binding is of physiological relevance.

D. The Yeast Two-Hybrid System

The yeast "two-hybrid" system takes advantage of transcriptional factors that are composed of two physically separable, functional domains. One commonly used system employs the yeast GAL4 transcriptional activator, consisting of a DNA binding domain and a transcriptional activation domain. Two different cloning vectors are used to generate separate fusions of the GAL4 domains to genes encoding potential binding proteins. The fusion proteins

are co-expressed, targeted to the nucleus and, if interactions occur, activation of a reporter gene (*e.g.*, lacZ) produces a detectable phenotype.

E. Other Methods

The nucleotide sequences and protein products, including both mutant and normal forms of these nucleic acids and their corresponding proteins, can be used with the above techniques to isolate other interacting proteins, and to identify other genes whose expression is altered by the over-expression of normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences, by the under-expression of normal CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs sequences, or by the expression of mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences. Identification of these interacting proteins, as well as the identification of other genes whose expression levels are altered in the face of mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences (for instance) will identify other gene targets which have direct relevance to the pathogenesis of this disease in its clinical or pathological forms. Specifically, these techniques rely on PCR-based and/or hybridization-based methods to identify genes which are differentially expressed between two conditions (a cell line expressing normal CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs compared to the same cell type expressing a mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence). These techniques include differential display, serial analysis of gene expression (SAGE), mass-spectrometry of protein, 2D-gels and subtractive hybridization (*See, e.g.*, Nowak, 270 SCI. 368-371 (1995); Kahn, 270 SCI. 369-370 (1995)).

8. Methods of Identifying Compounds Modulating CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF Activity

In another series of embodiments, the present invention provides for methods of identifying compounds with the ability to modulate the activity of normal and mutant CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs. As used with respect to this series of embodiments, the term "activity" broadly includes gene and protein expression, CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF protein post-translation processing, trafficking and localization, and any functional activity (*e.g.*, enzymatic, receptor-effector, binding, channel), as well as downstream affects of any of these. Using the transformed cells and transgenic animal models of the present invention, cells obtained from subjects bearing a mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene, or animals or human subjects bearing naturally occurring CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF mutations, it is now possible to screen candidate pharmaceuticals and treatments for their therapeutic effects by

detecting changes in one or more of the functional characteristics or phenotypic manifestations of normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF expression.

Thus, the present invention provides methods for screening or assaying for proteins, small molecules or other compounds which modulate CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF activity by contacting a cell *in vivo* or *in vitro* with a candidate compound and assaying for a change in a marker associated with normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF activity. The marker associated with CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF activity may be any measurable biochemical, physiological, histological and/or behavioral characteristic associated with CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF expression. In particular, useful markers will include any measurable biochemical, physiological, histological and/or behavioral characteristic which distinguishes cells, tissues, animals or individuals bearing at least one mutant CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene from their normal counterparts. In addition, the marker may be any specific or non-specific measure of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF activity, such as the GDP/GTP bound to Rap1/Ras. CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF specific measures include measures of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF expression (*e.g.,* CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF mRNA or protein levels) which may employ the nucleic acid probes or antibodies of the present invention. Non-specific measures include changes in cell physiology such as pH, intracellular calcium, cAMP levels, overall GTP/GDP ratios, phosphatidylinositol activity, protein phosphorylation, etc., which can be monitored by known methods. The activation or inhibition of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF activity in its mutant or normal form can also be monitored by examining changes in the expression of other genes which are specific to the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF pathway. These can be assayed by such techniques as differential display, differential hybridization, and SAGE, as well as by 2-D gel electrophoresis of cellular lysates. In each case, the differentially-expressed genes can be ascertained by inspection of identical studies before and after application of the candidate compound. Furthermore, as noted elsewhere, the particular genes whose expression is modulated by the administration of the candidate compound can be ascertained by cloning, nucleotide sequencing, amino acid sequencing, or mass spectrometry.

In general, a cell may be contacted with a candidate compound and, after an appropriate period (*e.g.,* 0-72 hours for most biochemical measures of cultured cells), the marker of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF activity may be assayed and compared to a baseline measurement.

The baseline measurement may be made prior to contacting the cell with the candidate compound or may be an external baseline established by other experiments or known in the art. The cell may be a transformed cell of the present invention or an explant from an animal or individual. In particular, the cell may be an explant from a carrier of a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF mutation or an animal model of the invention (*e.g.*, a transgenic nematode or mouse bearing a mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene). Preferred cells include those from neurological tissues such as neuronal, glial or mixed cell cultures; and cultured fibroblasts, liver, kidney, spleen, or bone marrow. The cells may be contacted with the candidate compounds in a culture *in vitro* or may be administered *in vivo* to a live animal or human subject. For live animals or human subjects, the test compound may be administered orally or by any parenteral route suitable to the compound. For clinical trials of human subjects, measurements may be conducted periodically (*e.g.*, daily, weekly or monthly) for several months or years.

In light of the identification, characterization, and disclosure herein of the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes and proteins, the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF nucleic acid probes and antibodies, and the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF transformed cells and transgenic animals of the invention, one of ordinary skill in the art is now enabled by perform a great variety of assays which will detect the modulation of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF activity by candidate compounds. Particularly preferred and contemplated embodiments are discussed in some detail below.

A. CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF Expression

In one series of embodiments, specific measures of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF expression are employed to screen candidate compounds for their ability to affect CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF activity. Thus, using the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF nucleic acids and antibodies disclosed and otherwise enabled herein, one may use mRNA levels or protein levels as a marker for the ability of a candidate compound to modulate CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF activity. The use of such probes and antibodies to measure gene and protein expression is well known in the art and discussed elsewhere herein.

B. Intracellular Localization

In another series of embodiments, compounds may be screened for their ability to modulate the activity of the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs based upon their effects on the

trafficking and intracellular localization of the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs. Differences in localization of mutant and normal CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs may contribute to the etiology of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF-associated diseases. Compounds which can affect the localization of the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs may, therefore, be identified as potential therapeutics. Standard techniques known in the art may be employed to detect the localization of the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs. Generally, these techniques will employ the antibodies of the present invention, and in particular antibodies which selectively bind to one or more mutant CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs but not to normal CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs. As is well known in the art, such antibodies may be labeled by any of a variety of techniques (*e.g.,* fluorescent or radioactive tags, labeled secondary antibodies, avidin-biotin, etc.) to aid in visualizing the intracellular location of the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs. The CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs may be co-localized to particular structures, as is known in the art, using antibodies to markers of those structures (*e.g.,* TGN38 for the Golgi, transferrin receptor for post-Golgi transport vesicles, LAMP2 for lysosomes). Western blots of purified fractions from cell lysates enriched for different intracellular membrane bound organelles (*e.g.,* lysosomes, synaptosomes, Golgi) may also be employed. In addition, the relative orientation of different domains of the CalDAG-GEFs and/or cAMP-GEFs across cellular domains may be assayed using, for example, electron microscopy and antibodies raised to those domains.

9. Screening and Diagnostics for CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders

A. General Diagnostic Methods

The CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes and gene products, as well as the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-derived probes, primers and antibodies, disclosed or otherwise enabled herein, are useful in the screening for carriers of alleles associated with CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders. Individuals at risk for such a disorder or individuals not previously known to be at risk, may be routinely screened using probes to detect the presence of a mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene or protein by a variety of techniques. Diagnosis of inherited cases of these diseases can be accomplished by methods based upon the nucleic acids (including genomic and mRNA/cDNA sequences), proteins, and/or antibodies disclosed and enabled herein, including functional assays designed to detect increases or decreases of the normal CalDAG-

GEF or cAMP-GEF activity and/or the presence of specific new activities conferred by the mutant CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs. Preferably, the methods and products are based upon the human CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF nucleic acids, proteins or antibodies, as disclosed or otherwise enabled herein. For brevity of exposition, but without limiting the scope of the invention, the following description will focus upon uses of the human homologues of CalDAG-GEF and cAMP-GEF. It will be understood, however, that homologous sequences from other species, including those disclosed herein, will be equivalent for many purposes.

B. Protein Based Screens and Diagnostics

When a diagnostic assay is to be based upon CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins, a variety of approaches are possible. For example, diagnosis can be achieved by monitoring differences in the electrophoretic mobility of normal and mutant proteins. Such an approach will be particularly useful in identifying mutants in which insertions, deletions or substitutions have resulted in a significant change in the electrophoretic migration of the resultant protein. Alternatively, diagnosis may be based upon differences in the proteolytic cleavage patterns of normal and mutant proteins, differences in molar ratios of the various amino acid residues, or by functional assays demonstrating altered function of the gene products.

C. Nucleic Acid Based Screens and Diagnostics

When the diagnostic assay is to be based upon nucleic acids from a sample, the assay may be based upon mRNA, cDNA or genomic DNA. Whether mRNA, cDNA, or genomic DNA is assayed, standard methods well known in the art may be used to detect the presence of a particular sequence either *in situ* or *in vitro* (*See, e.g.,* Sambrook et al., MOLECULAR CLONING: A LABORATORY MANUAL, 2nd ed. (1989)).

(1) Appropriate Probes and Primers

Whether for hybridization, RNase protection, ligase-mediated detection, PCR amplification or any other standards methods described herein and well known in the art, a variety of subsequences of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF sequences disclosed or otherwise enabled herein will be useful as probes and/or primers. These sequences or subsequences will include both normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences and deleterious mutant sequences. In general, useful sequences will include at least 8-10, more preferably 10-15, and most preferably 15-25 consecutive nucleotides from the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF

introns, exons or intron/exon boundaries. Useful sequences will also include at least 25-500 consecutive nucleotides from the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF introns, exons or intron/exon boundaries. Depending upon the target sequence, the specificity required, and future technological developments, shorter sequences may also have utility. Therefore, any CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF derived sequence which is employed to isolate, clone, amplify, identify or otherwise manipulate a CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequence may be regarded as an appropriate probe or primer.

(2) Hybridization Screening

For *in situ* detection of a normal or mutant CalDAG-GEF, cAMP-GEF or other CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF-associated nucleic acid sequence, a sample of tissue may be prepared by standard techniques and then contacted with one or more of the above-described probes, preferably one which is labeled to facilitate detection, and an assay for nucleic acid hybridization is conducted under stringent conditions which permit hybridization only between the probe and highly or perfectly complementary sequences.

(3) Restriction Mapping

Sequence alterations may also create or destroy fortuitous restriction enzyme recognition sites which are revealed by the use of appropriate enzyme digestion followed by electrophoresis and visualization. DNA fragments carrying the site (normal or mutant) are detected by their increase or reduction in size, or by the increase or decrease of corresponding restriction fragment numbers. Such restriction fragment length polymorphism analysis (RFLP), or restriction mapping, may be employed with genomic DNA, mRNA or cDNA. The CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences may be amplified by PCR using the above-described primers prior to restriction, in which case the lengths of the PCR products may indicate the presence or absence of particular restriction sites, and/or may be subjected to restriction after amplification. The CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF fragments may be visualized by any convenient means (*e.g.,* under UV light in the presence of ethidium bromide).

(4) PCR Mapping

In another series of embodiments, a single base substitution mutation may be detected based on differential PCR product length or production in PCR. Thus, primers which span mutant sites or which, preferably, have 3' termini at mutation sites, may be employed to amplify

a sample of genomic DNA, mRNA or cDNA from a subject. A mismatch at a mutational site may be expected to alter the ability of the normal or mutant primers to promote the polymerase reaction and, thereby, result in product profiles which differ between normal subjects and heterozygous and/or homozygous CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF mutants.

(5) Electrophoretic Mobility

Genetic testing based on DNA sequence differences also may be achieved by detection of alterations in electrophoretic mobility of DNA, mRNA or cDNA fragments in gels. Small sequence deletions and insertions, for example, can be visualized by high resolution gel electrophoresis of single or double stranded DNA, or as changes in the migration pattern of DNA heteroduplexes in non-denaturing gel electrophoresis.

(6) Chemical Cleavage of Mismatches

Mutations in the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs may also be detected by employing the chemical cleavage of mismatch (CCM) method (*See, e.g.,* Saleeba et al., METHODS IN ENZYMOLOGY, 217: 286-295 (1993)). In this technique, probes (up to ~ 1 kb) may be mixed with a sample of genomic DNA, cDNA or mRNA obtained from a subject. The sample and probes are mixed and subjected to conditions which allow for heteroduplex formation (if any). Preferably, both the probe and sample nucleic acids are double-stranded, or the probe and sample may be PCR amplified together, to ensure creation of all possible mismatch heteroduplexes. Mismatched T residues are reactive to osmium tetroxide and mismatched C residues are reactive to hydroxylamine. Because each mismatched A will be accompanied by a mismatched T, and each mismatched G will be accompanied by a mismatched C, any nucleotide differences between the probe and sample (including small insertions or deletions) will lead to the formation of at least one reactive heteroduplex. After treatment with osmium tetroxide and/or hydroxylamine to modify any mismatch sites, the mixture is subjected to chemical cleavage at any modified mismatch sites by, for example, reaction with piperidine. The mixture may then be analyzed by standard techniques such as gel electrophoresis to detect cleavage products which would indicate mismatches between the probe and sample.

(7) Other Methods

Various other methods of detecting CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF mutations, based upon the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF sequences disclosed and otherwise enabled herein, will be

apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art. Any of these may be employed in accordance with the present invention. These include, but are not limited to, nuclease protection assays (S1 or ligase-mediated), ligated PCR, denaturing gradient gel electrophoresis (DGGE; *see, e.g.,* Fischer et al., 80 PROC. NAT'L ACAD. SCI (USA), 1578-83 (1983)), restriction endonuclease fingerprinting combined with SSCP (REF-SSCP; *see, e.g.,* Liu et al., 18 BIOTECHNIQUES 470-79 (1995)), and the like.

D. Other Screens and Diagnostics

Diagnosis also can be made by observation of alterations in CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF transcription, translation, and post-translational modification and processing as well as alterations in the intracellular and extracellular trafficking of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene products in the brain and peripheral cells. Such changes will include alterations in the amount of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF messenger RNA and/or protein, alteration in phosphorylation state, abnormal intracellular location/distribution, abnormal extracellular distribution, etc. Such assays will include: Northern Blots (with CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF-specific and non-specific nucleotide probes), Western blots and enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA) (with antibodies raised specifically to a CalDAG-GEF or a cAMP-GEF functional domain, including various post-translational modification states).

E. Screening and Diagnostic Kits

In accordance with the present invention, diagnostic kits are also provided which will include the reagents necessary for the above-described diagnostic screens. For example, kits may be provided which include antibodies or sets of antibodies which are specific to one or more mutant epitopes. These antibodies may, in particular, be labeled by any of the standard means which facilitate visualization of binding. Alternatively, kits may be provided in which oligonucleotide probes or PCR primers, as described above, are present for the detection and/or amplification of mutant CalDAG-GEF, cAMP-GEF or other CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF-associated nucleotide sequences. Again, such probes may be labeled for easier detection of specific hybridization. As appropriate to the various diagnostic embodiments described above, the oligonucleotide probes or antibodies in such kits may be immobilized to substrates and appropriate controls may be provided.

10. Methods of Treatment

The present invention now provides a basis for therapeutic intervention in diseases which are associated to the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs in that they are caused, prevented, exacerbated, or alleviated, or which may be caused, prevented, exacerbated, or alleviated, by the either normal or mutant CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs. In considering the various therapies described below, it is understood that such therapies may be targeted at tissue other than the brain where CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF are also expressed.

Therapies to treat CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF-associated diseases may be based upon (1) administration of normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins, (2) gene therapy with normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes to compensate for or replace the mutant genes, (3) gene therapy based upon antisense sequences to mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes or which "knock-out" the mutant genes, (4) gene therapy based upon sequences which encode a protein which blocks or corrects the deleterious effects of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF mutants, (5) immunotherapy based upon antibodies to normal and/or mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins, or (6) small molecules (drugs) which alter CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF expression, block abnormal interactions between mutant forms of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF and other proteins or ligands, or which otherwise block the aberrant function of mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins by altering the structure of the mutant proteins, by enhancing their metabolic clearance, or by inhibiting their function.

A. Protein Therapy

Treatment of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders, or disorders resulting from CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF mutations, may be performed by providing an excess of inactive mutant protein to decrease the effect of the normal function of the protein, or by providing an excess of normal protein to reduce the effect of any aberrant function of the mutant protein, by replacing a mutant protein with normal protein, or by modulating the function of the mutant protein.

B. Gene Therapy

In one series of embodiments, gene therapy may be employed in which normal or mutant copies of the CalDAG-GEF gene or the cAMP-GEF gene are introduced into patients to code successfully for normal or mutant protein in one or more different affected cell types. The gene

must be delivered to those cells in a form in which it can be taken up and code for sufficient protein to provide effective function. Thus, it is preferred that the recombinant gene be operably joined to a strong promoter so as to provide a high level of expression which will compensate for, or out-compete, the naturally-occurring proteins. As noted above, the recombinant construct may contain endogenous or exogenous regulatory elements, inducible or repressible regulatory elements, or tissue-specific regulatory elements.

In another series of embodiments, gene therapy may be employed to replace the naturally-occurring gene by homologous recombination with a recombinant construct. The recombinant construct may contain a normal or a mutant copy of the targeted CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene, in which case the defect is corrected *in situ,* or may contain a "knock-out" construct which introduces a stop codon, missense mutation, or deletion which abolished function of the mutant gene. It should be noted in this respect that such a construct may knock-out both the normal and mutant copies of the targeted CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene in a heterozygous individual, but the total loss of CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene function may be less deleterious to the individual than continued progression of the disease state.

In another series of embodiments, antisense gene therapy may be employed. The antisense therapy is based on the fact that sequence-specific suppression of gene expression can be achieved by intracellular hybridization between mRNA or DNA and a complementary antisense species. The formation of a hybrid duplex may then interfere with the transcription of the gene and/or the processing, transport, translation and/or stability of the target CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF mRNA. Antisense strategies may use a variety of approaches including the administration of antisense oligonucleotides or antisense oligonucleotide analogs (*e.g.,* analogs with phosphorothioate backbones) or transfection with antisense RNA expression vectors. Again, such vectors may include exogenous or endogenous regulatory regions, inducible or repressible regulatory elements, or tissue-specific regulatory elements.

In another series of embodiments, gene therapy may be used to introduce a recombinant construct encoding a protein or peptide which blocks or otherwise corrects the aberrant function caused by a naturally-occurring CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF gene. In one embodiment, the recombinant gene may encode a peptide which corresponds to a mutant domain of a CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF which has been found to abnormally interact with another cell protein or

other cell ligand. Alternatively, the portion of a protein which interacts with a mutant, but not a normal, CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF may be encoded and expressed by a recombinant construct in order to compete with, and thereby inhibit or block, the aberrant interaction.

Retroviral vectors can be used for somatic cell gene therapy especially because of their high efficiency of infection and stable integration and expression. The targeted cells however must be able to divide and the expression of the levels of normal protein should be high. The full length CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF genes, subsequences encoding functional domains of the CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs, or any of the other therapeutic peptides described above, can be cloned into a retroviral vector and driven from its endogenous promoter, from the retroviral long terminal repeat, or from a promoter specific for the target cell type of interest. Other viral vectors which can be used include adeno-associated virus, vaccinia virus, bovine papilloma virus, or a herpes virus such as Epstein-Barr virus.

C. Immunotherapy

Antibodies may be raised to a mutant CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein (or a portion thereof) and be administered to a patient to bind or block the mutant protein and prevent its deleterious effects. Alternatively, antibodies may be raised to specific complexes between mutant or wild-type CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF and their interaction partners.

A further approach is to stimulate endogenous antibody production to the desired antigen. An immunogenic composition may be prepared as injectables, as liquid solutions or emulsions. The CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF protein or other antigen may be mixed with pharmaceutically acceptable excipients compatible with the protein. Such excipients may include water, saline, dextrose, glycerol, ethanol and combinations thereof. The immunogenic composition and vaccine may further contain auxiliary substances such as emulsifying agents or adjuvants to enhance effectiveness. Immunogenic compositions and vaccines may be administered parenterally by injection subcutaneously or intramuscularly.

The immunogenic preparations and vaccines are administered in such amount as will be therapeutically effective, protective and immunogenic. Dosage depends on the route of administration and will vary according to the size of the host.

D. Small Molecule Therapeutics

As described and enabled herein, the present invention provides for a number of methods of identifying small molecules or other compounds which may be useful in the treatment of CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders. Thus, for example, the present invention provides for methods of identifying CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF binding proteins and, in particular, methods for identifying proteins or other cell components which bind to or otherwise interact with mutant CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs but not with the normal CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs. The invention also provides for methods of identifying small molecules which can be used to disrupt undesired interactions between CalDAG-GEFs or cAMP-GEFs and other proteins or other cell components.

By identifying these proteins and analyzing these interactions, it is possible to screen for or design compounds which counteract or prevent the interaction, thereby, providing treatment for abnormal interactions. Therapies can be designed to modulate these interactions and thereby, to modulate CalDAG-GEF- or cAMP-GEF-associated disorders. The potential efficacy of these therapies can be tested by analyzing the affinity and function of these interactions after exposure to the therapeutic agent by standard pharmacokinetic measurements of affinity (*e.g.*, Kd, Vmax) using synthetic peptides or recombinant proteins corresponding to functional domains of the CalDAG-GEF gene, the cAMP-GEF gene or other CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF homologues. Another method for assaying the effect of any interactions involving functional domains is to monitor changes in the intracellular trafficking and post-translational modification of the relevant genes by *in situ* hybridization, immunohistochemistry, Western blotting and metabolic pulse-chase labeling studies in the presence of, and in the absence of, the therapeutic agents. A further method is to monitor the effects of "downstream" events including changes in second messenger events, *e.g.,* cAMP, intracellular Ca^{2+}, protein kinase activities, etc.

The effect of potential therapeutic agents in cell lines and whole animals can be monitored by monitoring transcription, translation, and post-translational modification of the CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF proteins. Methods for these studies include Western and Northern blots, immunoprecipitation after metabolic labelling (pulse-chase) with radio-labelled methionine and ATP, and immunohistochemistry. The effect of these agents can also be monitored using studies which examine the relative binding affinities and relative amounts of

CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins involved in interactions with Rap1A, using either standard binding affinity assays or co-precipitation and Western blots using antibodies to Rap1A, CalDAG-GEF, cAMP-GEF, or other CalDAG-GEF and/or cAMP-GEF homologues.

Therapy using antisense oligonucleotides to block the expression of the mutant CalDAG-GEF gene or the mutant cAMP-GEF gene, co-ordinated with gene replacement with normal CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF gene can also be applied using standard techniques of either gene therapy or protein replacement therapy.

V. Examples

Example 1: Isolation and characterization of CalDAG-GEF.

Human full-length CalDAG-GEFI cDNAs were isolated from a human frontal cortex λZAPII cDNA library (Stratagene) and a U937 λZAPII cDNA library. Mouse full-length CalDAG-GEFI was identified in the mouse EST database (GenBank accession number: W71787). Rat full-length CalDAG-GEFII cDNA was isolated from a rat whole brain λZAPII cDNA library by using human CalDAG-GEFII as a probe. Mouse ESTs identified through BLAST searches were purchased from Genome Systems Inc. (St. Louis, MO).

CalDAG-GEFI encodes an approximately 69-kD protein (Fig. 2D) that displays in its amino terminal region a GEF domain that is highly homologous to Ras-superfamily GEFs (Fig. 2A-2D). Multiple alignment analysis shows that genes of the CalDAG-GEF family form a cluster within the Ras-GEF superfamily distinct from Ras GEFs such as Sos1 and rRas-GEF (Fig. 2B). The region downstream of the GEF domain contains two tandem repeats of EF-hand Ca^{2+} binding motifs (Figs. 2A, 2E). The carboxy-terminal region displays a typical diacylglycerol/phorbol ester-binding domain, which is present in most PKC family proteins (Fig. 2A, 2F). Multiple sequence alignments and phylogenetic tree analysis were carried out with the LASERGENE Software Package (DNASTAR Inc.). Abbreviations and GenBank accession numbers of the protein sequences used in Figure 2 are as follows: C3G: 474982, mCdc25: 882120, rRas-GRF: 57665, hSos1 (human son-of-sevenless 1): 476780, BUD5: 171141, hCalmodulin: 115512, hCalbindin D28k: 227666, hCalcineurin B: 105504, hParvalbumin a: 131100, hTroponin C: 136043, hPKCa: 125549, hPKCb1: 125538, hPKCg: 462455.

To determine the small G protein target of CalDAG-GEFI, guanine nucleotide exchange activity *in vivo* was analyzed using intact 293T cells cotransfected with a eukaryotic expression construct of mouse CalDAG-GEFI and GST-tagged Ras family proteins. Full-length mouse CalDAG-GEFI cDNA inserted into a pCMV-SPORT expression vector with a carboxy-terminal FLAG epitope was used for transfection. A PCR-amplified fragment of rat CalDAG-GEFII was subcloned into a pCAGGS expression vector with the addition of His_6-tag at its amino-terminus, resulting in pCAGGS-His-CalDAGII. pEBG-Krev1 that expresses Rap1A was used as a fusion protein to glutathione S-transferase (GST) in mammalian cells, as described in Gotoh et al., 15 Mol. Cell Biol. 6746-53 (1995), pEBG-R-Ras, other vectors for Ras-family proteins obtained by inserting PCR-amplified cDNAs into pEBG expression vector, pCAGGS-C3G and pCAGGS-MSos1, and pCEV-H-RasV12. CalDAG-GEFI transfection produced a dramatic increase in GTP-bound Rap1A compared to the control but showed no or minimal activation of H-Ras, R-Ras, or Ral A. The increase in GTP-bound Rap1A was augmented in the presence of either the Ca^{2+} ionophore, A23187, or the phorbol ester, phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (TPA). Further, A23187 and TPA had additive effects when administered together.

To determine the effect of CalDAG-GEFI on the Erk/MAP kinase cascade, Elk1 activation was measured in 293T cells transfected with CalDAG-GEFI or constitutively active H-Ras (RasV12), or both. 293T cells were transfected by SuperFect (Qiagen) as described in Gotoh, *supra*, with expression vectors for GST-tagged Ras family proteins and with those for various GEFs. Cells were labeled 24 hours after transfection with $^{32}P_i$ for 2 hr. In some experiments, cells were stimulated with either 10 μM A23187 or 1 μM phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (TPA) for 3 min. GST-tagged Ras family proteins were collected from cell lysates with glutathione Sepharose. Guanine nucleotides bound to Ras family proteins were separated by thin layer chromatography (TLC). Activation of Elk1 was examined by the PathDetect Elk1 transreporting system (Stratagene). 293T cells were transfected with pFR-Luc and pFA-Elk1 with various expression vectors, and light output was detected and analyzed by the use of LAS1000 film. CalDAG-GEFI reduced RasV12 activation of Elk1 by approximately 4-fold and did not itself activate Elk1. Thus, CalDAG-GEFI strongly inhibits Ras-dependent stimulation of the Erk/MAP kinase cascade.

Northern analysis showed that human CalDAG-GEFI is expressed strongly in the brain and that CalDAG-GEFI mRNA is strikingly enriched in the striatum. Probes used included human CalDAG-GEFI: 729-bp EcoRI fragment, human CalDAG-GEFII: 584-bp SacI and HindIII fragment, rat CalDAG-GEFI: 439-bp fragment of EST clone RBC565 (GenBank accession number: C06861, and rat CalDAG-GEFII: 508-bp PCR amplified and subcloned fragment (nucleic acids 2541 to 3048 of SEQ ID NO:5). *In situ* hybridization of sections from the adult rat brain confirmed these restricted distribution patterns. Intense signal was present in the striatum (caudoputamen) and the ventral striatum (nucleus accumbens, olfactory tubercle). There was weaker signal in the olfactory bulb.

A series of monoclonal antibodies against the carboxy-terminal half of mouse CalDAG-GEFI were raised. His_6-tagged mouse CalDAG-GEFI polypeptide (amino acids 349 to 608 of SEQ ID NO:1) was expressed in bacteria, purified over Ni^{2+}-nitrilotriacetic acid-agarose resin, and then used to immunize BALB/c mice. The resultant polyclonal antiserum was monitored by ELISA, Western blot, immunoprecipitation, and immunofluorescence assays on CalDAG-GEFI-transfected COS-7 cells. Hybridomas were generated by PEG (polyethylene glycol)-mediated fusion of donor splenocytes to the SP2/O cell line. Positive hybridoma cell lines were identified by screening in the assays described above, and purified by limiting dilution and single-cell cloning. Three hybridoma cell lines against mouse CalDAG-GEFI (mAbs 18B11, 2D9, and 18A7), in addition to the polyclonal fusion serum, were identified. Western analysis showed that mAbs 18B11 and 2D9 were specific for CalDAG-GEFI. Lightly post-fixed, cryostat-cut 10 μm thick sections were immunostained by the ABC (Vectastain kit) method for CalDAG-GEFI with mAbs 18B11 and 2D9 and the polyclonal fusion serum, for tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) with monoclonal antibodies from INCSTAR, and for μ opioid receptor with polyclonal antiserum. Immunohistochemistry with mAb 18B11 showed a striking basal ganglia-enriched distribution pattern in sections of adult rat brain, with significant but weaker activity elsewhere. CalDAG-GEFI immunoreactivity marked the entire pathway from the striatal matrix compartment to the pallidum and substantia nigra pars reticulata, where very intense CalDAG-GEFI staining was present. Thus, CalDAG-GEFI is synthesized in striatal projection neurons and is transported to striatopallidal and striatonigral terminals.

To confirm that CalDAG-GEFI is synthesized in striatal projection neurons and transported to striatopallidal and striatonigral terminals in rats, intrastriatal injections of ibotenic acid (20 μg/μl, 1.5 μl per site, 5 day survival) were made unilaterally at 2 sites in the mid-lateral caudoputamen, with contralateral vehicle control injections were made. In other rats, unilateral subthalamic knife-cuts were made at an anteroposterior level between the entopeduncular nucleus and substantia nigra to sever the striatonigral efferents (1 and 3 days survivals), with control contralateral thalamic knife-cuts. These procedures all reduced CalDAG-GEFI staining in the substantia nigra. *In situ* hybridization was performed according to Simmons et al, 12 J. Histotechnol. 169-181 (1989). A 439bp rat EST clone RBC565 (98.4% identical to mouse CalDAG-GEFI nucleic acids 1777 to 2216 of SEQ ID NO:1) was isolated by BLAST search and used for making RNA probes with ^{32}P-labeled UTP (2,000 Ci/mmol, NEN, 1 Ci = 37 GBq) and T3 and T7 RNA polymerase. Brains were processed as above for CalDAG-GEFI and TH immunostaining. Thus, CalDAG-GEFI is a protein transported in striatal axons to their terminals. The terminal localization of CalDAG-GEFI was confirmed in subcellular fractionation experiments on dissected samples from the rat ventral midbrain, in which Western analysis showed the presence of CalDAG-GEFI in cytosol and in membrane fractions, including synaptosomes.

Because of the similarity of the GEF domains of CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII, the substrate specificity of CalDAG-GEFII with the same 293T cell assay system used for CalDAG-GEFI was examined. It was confirmed that CalDAG-GEFII activates Ras, and further shown that it activates H-Ras and R-Ras, but not Ral A or Rap1A. H-Ras activation was enhanced by A23187 and TPA. Moreover, CalDAG-GEFII, unlike CalDAG-GEFI, increased the transcriptional activity of Elk1 downstream to Erk/MAP kinase. Thus, in the 293T system, CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII target different Ras-superfamily small G proteins and have opposite effects on the MAP kinase cascade. Northern analysis further showed contrasting brain expression for CalDAG-GEFII, with highest expression being in the cerebellum, cerebral cortex, and amygdala, and low expression occurring in the striatum. Both genes are also expressed in hematopoietic organs in both human and rat.

Rap signaling is important in regulating basal ganglia output in response to Ca^{2+} and DAG. Corticostriatal inputs can activate the MAP kinase cascade in striatal projection neurons

(Sgambat et al., 18 J. Neurosci. 214-26 (1993)) and phosphoinositide (PI) signaling is strongly represented in these pathways (Fotuhi et al., 13 J. Neurosci. 3300-08 (1993)). Moreover, a number of receptor systems in the striatum and its striatonigral/striatopallidal pathways are linked to Ca^{2+} and PI signaling, notably including NMDA and metabotropic glutamate receptors, D_2-class dopamine receptors, and tachykinin receptors (Fiorillo et al., 394 Nature 78-82 (1998)). A previously unrecognized signaling target for some of these systems is likely to be Rap1, via CalDAG-GEFI. In addition, CalDAG-GEFI has a synaptic function as demonstrated by the heavy accumulation of CalDAG-GEFI in the target nuclei of striatal outputs and the localization of Rap1 in synaptosomes and synaptic vesicles. The particular basal ganglia projection systems are enriched in CalDAG-GEFI and are differentially vulnerable to neurodegeneration in Huntington's disease.

Rap and Ras functions can be regulated coordinately or disjunctively by Ca^{2+} and DAG in the brain and hematopoietic organs, depending on the relative expression of CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII. In neurons, Ras/MAP kinase signaling has been directly implicated in synaptic transmission and the neuroplasticity underlying learning and memory. Different CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII expression patterns in the brain influence region-specific neuroplasticity mediated by Ca^{2+} and DAG signaling pathways. The presence of CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII in the hematopoietic system demonstrates the direct input of Ca^{2+} and DAG to Ras/Rap regulation of normal growth and differentiation as well as malignant transformation.

Example 2: Isolation and characterization of cAMP-GEFs.

cAMP-GEFI and cAMP-GEFII have similar domain structures, with a cAMP binding domain at the amino terminus and a GEF domain at the carboxy terminus separated by a link region (LR) (Fig. 3A). These mammalian proteins show strong structural homology to a predicted open reading frame (T20G5.5) in *C. elegans* cAMP-GEF (cel cAMP-GEF) (Fig. 3A). The cAMP binding domains of the cAMP-GEF family proteins form a distinct group within the cyclic nucleotide-binding protein superfamily and show the closest similarity to the B domains of PKA regulatory subunits (Fig. 3B). A PR(A/T)AT motif in the cAMP binding pocket is also conserved in the cAMP-GEF proteins (Fig. 3E). The first alanine of this motif confers cAMP

(alanine) as opposed to cGMP (threonine) binding specificity. All of the cAMP-GEF family members have alanine at this position, and therefore bind cAMP rather then cGMP.

The GEF domains of the cAMP-GEFs show high homology to those of Ras-GEF family proteins, but form an independent cluster distinct from Ras GEFs such as mCdc25, hSos1, and rRas-GRF (Fig. 3, C and D). The three structurally conserved regions specific to Ras-GEF family proteins (SCR1, SCR2, and SCR3) are present in all of the cAMP-GEF proteins (Fig. 3D). Multiple sequence alignments and phylogenetic tree analyses were carried out with LASERGENE (DNASTAR Inc.). Abbreviations and GenBank accession numbers of the protein sequences used in this figure: hPKARIα (human cAMP-dependent protein kinase regulatory subunit type I-alpha): 125193, hPKARIβ: 1346362, hPKARIIα: 125198, hPKARIIβ: 400115, hPKGIα (human cGMP-dependent protein kinase type I-alpha): 1255602, hPKGIβ: 125379, hPKGII: 1906312, hCalDAG-GEFI: U71870, hCalDAG-GEFII: AF081195, C3G: 474982, hSosl (human son-of-sevenless 1): 476780, mCdc25: 882120, rRas-GRF: 57665, BUD5: 171141.

In order to identify the small G protein substrate for cAMP-GEFI and II and the mode of cAMP regulation of GEF activity conferred by these proteins, the effects of cAMP-GEFI and cAMP-GEFII expression were analyzed in 293T cells on the ratio of GTP to GDP bound to different Ras family small G proteins in the presence or absence of forskolin and IBMX. Under basal conditions, in the absence of forskolin and IBMX, only Rap1 was activated significantly. In the presence of forskolin and IBMX, both cAMP-GEFI and II strongly and selectively activated Rap1A, but did not activate H-Ras, R-Ras or RalA. The effects of forskolin/IBMX treatment on cAMP-GEFI and II were dose-dependent with EC_{50} values of 1.8 μM and 0.3 μM, respectively. Forskolin/IBMX treatment given alone had no effect.

A time-course analysis of the activation of Rap1A by forskolin/IBMX in cAMP-GEFI transfectants showed that the activation began within 10 sec, reached a maximum at 5 min, and continued for at least 60 min. Thus, cAMP-GEFI has a direct effect on Rap1A rather than secondary effects mediated by other Ras-superfamily GEFs. In addition, Sp-cAMPS, an analogue of cAMP, activated Rap1A at levels similar to those induced by forskolin/IBMX. Thus, cAMP has the capacity to activate the GEF domain of cAMP-GEFI.

Mutational analyses with cAMP-GEFI was performed to examine whether its cAMP-binding domain is required for the activation of Rap1A. In contrast to wild type cAMP-GEFI, a deletion mutant lacking a cAMP binding domain (pcDNA-rcAMP-GEFI:DcAMP(528) and (595)) did not activate Rap1A with or without forskolin/IBMX treatment. Mutants with a single amino acid substitution at the cAMP binding pocket (pcDNA-rcAMP-GEFI:R(279)K) responded minimally to forskolin/IBMX treatment. Thus, the cAMP binding domain of cAMP-GEFI is necessary for its cAMP-dependent activation of Rap1A.

To assess further the cAMP binding capacity of cAMP-GEFI, a cAMP agarose affinity bead binding assay was performed. *In vitro* translated, radiolabeled cAMP-GEFI showed selective binding to the beads that was competed by excess amounts of either cAMP or 8-Br-cAMP. cAMP-GEF protein can bind cAMP and that this binding can activate Rap1A.

cAMP-dependent activation of Rap1 has previously been ascribed to the phosphorylation of Rap1A by PKA, which raises its affinity to smgGDS, a GEF with broad substrate specificity. However, at least in the 293T cell assay system, an increase of GTP-bound Rap1A in response to increasing cAMP levels with forskolin or treatment with the cAMP analogue, Sp-cAMPS was not detected in the absence of cAMP-GEFs. In addition, even in the presence of H-89, a potent and selective inhibitor of PKA, cAMP-GEFI and II could still activate Rap1A. The activation of Rap1A induced by cAMP-GEFI and II is independent of the PKA pathway.

Intracellular cAMP has been shown to interact directly with ion channels, but the vast majority of cAMP-mediated effects in eukaryotes have been considered as sequels to cAMP binding by the regulatory subunits of the PKA tetramer. The diversity of physiological effects produced by cAMP have been attributed to the fact that, as a kinase, PKA has a large range of molecular targets. Reported herein are novel cAMP binding proteins that directly link the cAMP second messenger system to Ras superfamily signaling pathways and that appear selectively to target Rap.

cAMP can exert profound cell-type specific effects on cell growth and differentiation and that cAMP is capable of inhibiting or stimulating the Ras/mitogen-activated protein (MAP) kinase/Erk pathway. The inhibition can occur at the initial translocation step by which Ras activates Raf, whereas activation of Rap1 is thought to occur through phosphorylation by PKA. Activation of Rap1 has been suggested to be part of a switch mechanism determining whether

growth or differentiation occurs in response to nerve growth factor (NGF). cAMP-GEFs directly couple cAMP to Rap1, itself discovered as a negative regulator of Ras but suspected of having independent functions as well. Thus, different levels of cAMP-GEF expression confer cell-type specific regulation of Ras superfamily signaling systems.

The genes also exhibit developmentally regulated expression in the septum, medial thalamus and habenula, key structures in the limbic system variously linked to brain reward circuits, addiction and schizophrenia. Thus, cAMP-GEFs, in addition to PKA, underlie some of the neuronal functions of cAMP.

Example 3. Northern hybridization demonstrating the expression of CalDAG-GEFI and CalDAG-GEFII protein mRNAs in a variety of tissues.

Total cytoplasmic RNA was isolated from various human tissue samples including amygdala, cerebellum, corpus callosum, caudate nucleus, cortex, frontal lobe, hippocampus, kidney, liver, lung, medulla obongata, occipital pole, putamen, spinal cord, substantia nigra, subthalamic nucleus, thalamus, and temporal lobe, obtained from surgical pathology using standard procedures such as CsCl purification. The RNA was then electrophoresed on a formaldehyde gel to permit size fractionation. The nitrocellulose membrane was prepared and the RNA was then transferred onto the membrane. ^{32}P-labeled cDNA probes were prepared and added to the membrane in order for hybridization between the probe the RNA to occur. After washing, the membrane was wrapped in plastic film and placed into imaging cassettes containing X-ray film. The autoradiographs were then allowed to develop for one to several days. Sizing was established by comparison to standard RNA markers. These northern blots demonstrated that the CalDAG-GEF genes are strongly expressed in the brain. Weaker hybridization was detectable elsewhere.

Example 4. Northern hybridization demonstrating the expression of cAMP-GEFI and cAMP-GEFII protein mRNAs in a variety of tissues.

Northern hybridization analysis was performed as in Example 3 to detect the expression of the cAMP-GEFI and cAMP-GEFII genes in a variety of human tissues. The tissues analyzed included adrenal gland, amygdala, bone marrow, cerebellum, corpus callosum, caudate nucleus,

colon (mucosal lining), caudputamen, cortex, frontal lobe, hippocampus, habenula, heart, kidney, liver, lung, lymph node, medulla obongata, occipital pole, olfactory bulb, ovary, pons, pancreas, putamen, septum, small intestines, skeletal muscle, spinal cord, spleen, stomach, substantia nigra, subthalamic nucleus, testis, thalamus, temporal lobe, thymus, trachea, and thyroid.

A striking contrast in the expression patterns of human cAMP-GEFI and II was observed by Northern analysis. Human cAMP-GEFI is widely expressed, with highest levels appearing in kidney, spleen, thyroid, heart, and pancreas. Human cAMP-GEFII shows a remarkably selective enrichment in the brain and the adrenal glands. Both genes were developmentally regulated. The expression patterns of the two genes in the nervous system also differ, with cAMP-GEFI having a wider expression than cAMP-GEFII. These region-specific neuronal expression patterns were confirmed in *in situ* hybridization experiments. cAMP-GEFI mRNA is expressed broadly at low levels in the adult brain, but it is strongly and selectively expressed in parts of the neonatal brain, including the septum and the thalamus. By contrast, cAMP-GEFII is strongly expressed in the mature as well as the developing brain. Notable are the high levels of cAMP-GEFII mRNA in the cerebral cortex, the hippocampus (especially CA3 and dentate gyrus), the habenula and the cerebellum. Genes of the cAMP-GEF family have widespread influence on cAMP functions in bodily organs and also region-specific functions in the brain.

Example 5. Isolation of CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF binding proteins by yeast two-hybrid system.

To identify proteins interacting with the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF proteins, a yeast expression plasmid vector (pAS2-1, Clontech) is generated by ligating an in-frame partial cDNA sequence encoding either residues of the CalDAG-GEF protein or residues of the cAMP-GEF protein into the EcoRI and BamHI sites of the vector. The resultant fusion protein contains the GAL4 DNA binding domain coupled in-frame either to residues of the CalDAG-GEF protein or to residues of the cAMP-GEF protein. These expression plasmids are co-transformed, along with purified plasmid DNA from the human brain cDNA:pACT library, into yeast using the protocols of the Clontech Matchmaker yeast-two-hybrid kit (Clontech). Yeast clones bearing human brain cDNAs which interact with the CalDAG-GEF or cAMP-GEF fragments are selected by HIS resistance and βgal+ activation. The clones are further selected by

cyclohexamide sensitivity and the inserts of the human brain cDNAs are isolated by PCR and sequenced.

Although preferred embodiments of the invention have been described herein in detail, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that variations may be made thereto without departing from the spirit of the invention or the scope of the following claims.